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A Poetics of Anticolonialism
Robin D.G. Kelley

Are New Trade Wars Looming?
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The CIA and the Cultural Cold War Revisited
James Petras

1949-1999 50 YEARS

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MONTHLY REVIEW VOLUME 51 NUMBER 6 NOVEMBER 1999

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NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

We've been discussing among ourselves exactly what we want to achieve with these Notes from the Editors, and our conclusion is that we want to leave the objectives of the Notes as open-ended as they always have been. Over the years, they have been everything from editorials about some pressing current event, to news about the *MR* community, or reflections on something we've read, including correspondence from our readers. What these all have in common is that they give us a chance to make more or less current comments on things that have happened or things we've been thinking about since the last issue.

This is important to us, and, we think, to our readers. Although we sometimes make exceptions for extraordinary events like the bombing of Yugoslavia, *MR* isn't and was never meant to be a news magazine, always tracking fast-breaking events as they happen, or even in immediate retrospect. But the Notes from the Editors, which are usually written after everything else in the issue is ready, allow us some more immediate reflections.

The trouble, of course, is that so much always happens in a month that we think calls for comment—not just pressing global news but all kinds of events, large and small, that provoke responses of one sort or another. In the month

(continued on inside back cover)

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A Poetics of Anticolonialism

by Robin D.G. Kelley

Author's note: Mad props to Christopher Phelps for inviting me to write this essay; to Franklin Rosemont for passing along key documents, commenting on and correcting an earlier draft, and for his untiring support; to Cedric Robinson for forcing me to come to terms with Césaire's critique of Marxism in the first place; to Judith MacFarlane for her wonderful and exact translations; to Elleza and Diedra for cultivating the Marvelous. This essay is dedicated to Ted Joans and Laura Corsiglia with love and gratitude for our "Discourse on Theloniolism."

Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* might be best described as a declaration of war. I would almost call it a "third world manifesto," but hesitate because it is primarily a polemic against the old order bereft of the kind of propositions and proposals that generally accompany manifestos. Yet, *Discourse* speaks in revolutionary cadences, capturing the spirit of its age just as Marx and Engels did 102 years earlier in their little manifesto. First published in 1950 as *Discours sur le colonialisme*, it appeared just as the old empires were on the verge of collapse, thanks in part to a world war against fascism that left Europe in material, spiritual, and philosophical shambles. It

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was the age of decolonization and revolt in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Five years earlier, in 1945, black people from around the globe gathered in Manchester, England, for the Fifth Pan-African Congress to discuss the freedom and future of Africa. Five years later, in 1955, representatives from the Non-Aligned Nations gathered in Bandung, Indonesia, to discuss the freedom and future of the third world. Mao's revolution in China was a year old, while the Mau Mau in Kenya were just gearing up for an uprising against their colonial masters. The French encountered insurrections in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Cameroon, and Madagascar, and suffered a humiliating defeat by the Viet Minh at Dien Bien Phu. Revolt was in the air. India, the Philippines, Guyana, Egypt, Guatemala, South Africa, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Harlem, you name it. Revolt! Malcolm X once described this extraordinary moment, this long decade from the end of the Second World War to the late 1950s, as a "tidal wave of color."

Discourse on Colonialism is indisputably one of the key texts in this "tidal wave" of anticolonial literature produced during the postwar period—works that include W.E.B. DuBois' *Color and Democracy* (1945) and *The World and Africa* (1947), Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), George Padmore's *Pan-Africanism or Communism?: The Coming Struggle for Africa* (1956), Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1957), Richard Wright's *White Man Listen!* (1957), Jean-Paul Sartre's essay, "Black Orpheus" (1948), and journals such as *Présence Africaine* and *African Revolution.* As with much of the radical literature produced during this epoch, *Discourse* places the colonial question front and center. Although Césaire, remaining somewhat true to his Communist affiliation, never quite dethrones the modern proletariat from its exalted status as a revolutionary force, the European working class is practically invisible. This is a book about colonialism, its impact on the colonized, on culture, on history, on the very concept of civilization itself, and most importantly, on the colonizer. In the finest Hegelian fashion, Césaire demonstrates how colonialism works to "decivilize" the colonizer: torture, violence, race

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hatred, and immorality constitute a dead weight on the so-called civilized, pulling the master class deeper and deeper into the abyss of barbarism. The instruments of colonial power rely on barbaric, brutal violence and intimidation, and the end result is the degradation of Europe itself. Hence Césaire can only scream: "Europe is indefensible."

Europe is also dependent. Anticipating Fanon's famous proposition that "Europe is literally the creation of the Third World," Césaire reveals, over and over again, that the colonizers' sense of superiority, their sense of mission as the world's civilizers, depends on turning the Other into a barbarian. The Africans, the Indians, the Asians cannot possess civilization or a culture equal to that of the imperialists, or the latter have no purpose, no justification for the exploitation and domination of the rest of the world. The colonial encounter, in other words, requires a reinvention of the colonized, the deliberate destruction of her past—what Césaire calls "thingification." *Discourse*, then, has a double-edged meaning: it is Césaire's discourse on the material and spiritual havoc created by colonialism, and it is a critique of colonial discourse. Anticipating the explosion of work we now call "postcolonial studies," Césaire's critique of figures such as Dominique O. Mannoni, Roger Caillois, Ernest Renan, Yves Florenne, and Jules Romaine, among others, reveals how the circulation of colonial ideology—an ideology of racial and cultural hierarchy—is as essential to colonial rule as police and corvée labor.

Surprisingly, few assessments of postcolonial criticism pay much attention to *Discourse*, besides mentioning it in a litany of "pioneering" works without bothering to elaborate on its contents. Robert Young's *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (1990) dates the origins of postcolonial studies to Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, despite the fact that some of the arguments in Fanon were already present in *Discourse*. On the other hand, literary critics tend to skip over *Discourse* or dismiss it as an anomaly born of Césaire's eleven-year stint as a member of the Communist Party of Martinique. It has been read in terms of whether it conforms to or breaks from "Marxist orthodoxy." I want to suggest that *Discourse* made

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some critical contributions to our thinking about colonialism, fascism, and revolution. First, its recasting of the history of Western Civilization helps us locate the origins of fascism within colonialism itself; hence, within the very traditions of humanism, critics believed fascism threatened. Second, Césaire was neither confused about Marxism nor masquerading as a Marxist when he wrote *Discourse*. On the contrary, he was attempting to revise Marx, along the lines of his predecessors such as W.E.B. DuBois and M.N. Roy, by suggesting that the anticolonial struggle supersedes the proletarian revolution as the fundamental historical movement of the period. The implications are enormous: the coming revolution was not posed in terms of capitalism versus socialism (the very last paragraph notwithstanding, but we shall return to this later), but in terms of the complete and total overthrow of a racist, colonialist system that would open the way to imagine a whole new world.

What such a world might look like is never spelled out, but that brings me to the final point about *Discourse*: it should be read as a surrealist text, perhaps even an unintended synthesis of Césaire's understanding of poetry (via Rimbaud) as revolt and his re-vision of historical materialism. For all of his Marxist criticism and Négritudian assertion, Césaire's text plumbs the depths of the unconscious so that we might comprehend colonialism through his entire being. It is full of flares, full of anger, full of humor. It is not a solution or a strategy or a manual or a little red book with pithy quotes. It is a dancing flame in a bonfire.

Aimé Césaire's credentials as colonial critic are impeccable. Born on June 26, 1913, in the small town of Bass-Pointe, Martinique, he and his five siblings were raised by a mother who was a dressmaker and a father who held a post as the local tax inspector. Although their father was well-educated and they shared the cultural sensibilities of the petit-bourgeois, the Césaires nonetheless lived close to the edge of rural poverty. Aimé turned out to be a brilliant, precocious student and, at age eleven, was admitted to the Lycée Schoelcher in Fort-de-France. There he met Léon-Gontran Damas from Guiana, one

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of his childhood soccer-mates (who would go on to collaborate with Césaire and Senegalese poet Léopold Sédar Senghor in launching the Négritude movement). Césaire graduated from the Lycée in 1931 and took prizes in French, Latin, English, and history. Unlike many of his colleagues, he could not wait to leave home for the mother country—France. "I was not at ease in the Antillean world," he recalled. That would change during his eight-year stay in Paris.

Once settled in Paris, he enrolled at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand to prepare for the grueling entrance exams to get into the École Normale Superieure. There he met a number of like-minded intellectuals, most notably Senghor. Meeting Senghor, and another Senegalese intellectual, Ousman Soce, inspired in Césaire an interest in Africa, and their collaborations eventually gave birth to the concept of Négritude. There were other black diasporic intellectual circles in Paris at the time, notably the group surrounding the Nardal sisters of Martinique (Paulette, Jane, and Andrée), who ran a salon out of which came *La Revue de Monde Noir*, edited by Paulette Nardal and Léo Sajous. Another circle of Martinican students, consisting mainly of Etienne Lero, René Ménil, J.M. Monnerot, and Pierre and Simone Yoyotte, joined together to declare their commitment to surrealism and communist revolution. In their one and only issue of *Légitime Défense*, published in 1932, they excoriated the French-speaking black bourgeoisie, attacked the servility of most West Indian literature, celebrated several black U.S. writers like Langston Hughes and Claude McKay, and denounced racism (paying special attention to the Scottsboro case). Césaire knew about the Nardal sisters' salon but found it entirely "too bourgeois" for his tastes. And though he had read *Légitime Défense*, he considered the group too assimilated: "There was nothing to distinguish them either from the French surrealists or the French Communists. In other words, their poems were colorless."

Césaire, Senghor, Léon Damas, and others were part of a different intellectual circle that centered around a journal called *L'Étudiant Noir*. In its March 1935 issue, Césaire published a passionate tract against assimilation, in which he first

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coined the term "Négritude." It is more than ironic that at the moment Césaire's piece appeared, he was hard at work absorbing as much French and European humanities as possible in preparation for his entrance exams for L'École Normale Superieure. The exams took their toll, for sure, though the psychic and emotional costs of having to imbibe the very culture Césaire publicly rejected must have exacerbated an already exhausting regimen. After completing his exams during the summer of 1935, he took a short vacation to Yugoslavia with a fellow student. While visiting the Adriatic coast, Césaire was overcome with memories of home after seeing a small island from a distance. Moved, he stayed up half the night working on a long poem about the Martinique of his youth—the land, the people, the majesty of the place. The next morning when he inquired about the little island, he was told it was called Martinska. A magical chance encounter, to say the least, the words he penned that moonlit night were the beginnings of what would subsequently become his most famous poem of all: *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (*Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*). The next summer he did return to Martinique, but was greeted by an even greater sense of alienation. He returned to France to complete his thesis on African-American writers of the Harlem Renaissance and their representations of the South, and then, on July 10, 1937, married Suzanne Roussy, a fellow Martinican student with whom he had worked on *L'Étudiant Noir*.

The couple returned to Martinique in 1939 and began teaching in Fort-de-France. Joining forces with René Ménil, Lucie Thesée, Aristide Maugée, Georges Gratiant, and others, they launched a journal called *Tropiques*. The appearance of *Tropiques* coincided with the fall of France to the fascist Vichy regime, which consequently put the colonies of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Guiana under Vichy rule. The effect was startling; any illusions Césaire and his comrades might have harbored about colorblind French brotherhood were shattered when thousands of French sailors arrived on the island. Their racism was blatant and direct. As literary critic A. James Arnold observed, "The insensitivity of this military regime also

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made it difficult for Martinicans to ignore the fact that they were a colony like any other, a conclusion that the official policy of assimilation had masked somewhat. These conditions contributed to radicalizing Césaire and his friends, preparing them for a more anticolonialist posture at the end of the war." The official policy of the regime to censor *Tropiques* and interdict the publication when it was deemed subversive also hastened the group's radicalization. In a notorious letter dated May 10, 1943, Martinique's Chief of Information Services, Lt. de Vaisseau Bayle, justified interdicting *Tropiques* for being "a revolutionary review that is racial and sectarian." Bayle accused the editors of poisoning the spirit of society, sowing hatred and ruining the morale of the country. Two days later, the editors penned a brilliant polemical response:

> To Lieutenant de Vaisseau Bayle:
>
> Sir, We have received your indictment of *Tropiques*.
>
> "Racists," "sectarians," "revolutionaries," "ingrates and traitors to the country," "poisoners of souls," none of these epithets really repulses us. "Poisoners of Souls," like Racine, . . . "Ingrates and traitors to our good Country," like Zola, ... "Revolutionaries," like the Hugo of "Châtiments." "Sectarians," passionately, like Rimbaud and Lautréamont. Racists, yes. Of the racism of Toussaint Louverture, of Claude McKay and Langston Hughes against that of Drumont and Hitler. As to the rest of it, don't expect for us to plead our case, nor vain recriminations, nor discussion. We do not speak the same language.
>
> Signed: Aimé Césaire, Suzanne Césaire, Georges Gratiant, Aristide Maugée, René Ménil, Lucie Thesée.

But in order for *Tropiques* to survive, they had to camouflage their boldness, passing it off as a journal of West Indian folklore. Yet, despite the repressions and the ruses, *Tropiques* survived the war as one of the most important and radical surrealist publications in the world. Lasting from 1941 to 1945, the essays and poems it published (by the Césaires, René Ménil, and others) reveal the evolution of a sophisticated anticolonial stance, as well as a vision of a postcolonial future. Theirs was a vision of freedom that drew on Modernism and a deep appreciation for pre-colonial African modes of thought and practice; it drew on Surrealism as the strategy of revolution

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of the mind and Marxism as revolution of the productive forces. It was an effort to carve out a position independent of all of these forces, a kind of wedding of Négritude, Marxism, and surrealism, and their collective efforts would have a profound impact on international surrealism, in general, and on André Breton, in particular. *Tropiques* also published Breton, as well as texts by Pierre Mabille, Benjamin Peret, and other surrealists. In fact, it is not too much to proclaim Suzanne Césaire as one of surrealism's most original theorists. Unlike critics who boxed surrealism into narrow "avant garde" tendencies such as futurism or cubism, Suzanne Césaire linked it to broader movements such as Romanticism, socialism, and Négritude. Surrealism, she argued, was not an ideology as such but a state of mind, a "permanent readiness for the Marvelous." In a 1941 issue of *Tropiques*, she imagined new possibilities in terms that were foreign to Marxists; she called on readers to embrace "the domain of the strange, the marvelous and the fantastic, a domain scorned by people of certain inclinations. Here is the freed image, dazzling and beautiful, with a beauty that could not be more unexpected and overwhelming. Here are the poet, the painter, and the artist, presiding over the metamorphoses and the inversions of the world under the sign of hallucination and madness." And yet, when she speaks of the domain of the Marvelous, she has her sights on the chains of colonial domination, never forgetting the crushing reality of everyday life in Martinique and the rest of the world. In "Surrealism and Us: 1943," she writes with a boldness and clarity that would come to characterize her husband's *Discourse on Colonialism*:

> Thus, far from contradicting, diluting, or diverting our revolutionary attitude toward life, surrealism strengthens it. It nourishes an impatient strength within us, endlessly reinforcing the massive army of refusals.
>
> And I am also thinking of tomorrow.
>
> Millions of black hands will hoist their terror across the furious skies of world war. Freed from a long benumbing slumber, the most disinherited of all peoples will rise up from plains of ashes.

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> Our surrealism will supply this rising people with a punch from its very depths. Our surrealism will enable us to finally transcend the sordid antinomies of the present: whites/Blacks, Europeans/Africans, civilized/savages—at last rediscovering the magic power of the mahoulis, drawn directly from living sources. Colonial idiocy will be purified in the welder's blue flame. We shall recover our value as metal, our cutting edge of steel, our unprecedented communions.

Although the influence of surrealism on Aimé Césaire has been called into question recently, the question of his surrealism is usually posed in terms of André Breton's influence on Césaire. Surrealism in this context is treated as "European thought," and like Marxism, considered foreign to non-European traditions. But this sort of "diffusionist" interpretation leaves no room for the Césaires (both Aimé and Suzanne) to be innovators of surrealism, to have introduced fresh ideas to Breton and his colleagues. I want to suggest that the Césaires not only embraced surrealism—independently of the Paris Group, I might add—but opened new vistas and contributed enormously to theorizing the "domain of the Marvelous."

Aimé Césaire, after all, has never denied his surrealist leanings. As he explains in an interview: "Surrealism provided me with what I had been confusedly searching for. I have accepted it joyfully because in it I have found more of a confirmation than a revelation." Surrealism, he explained, helped him to summon up powerful unconscious forces. "This, for me, was a call to Africa. I said to myself: it's true that superficially we are French, we bear the marks of French customs; we have been branded by Cartesian philosophy, by French rhetoric; but if we break with all that, if we plumb the depths, then what we will find is fundamentally black." And, in another interview with Jacqueline Leiner, he was even more enthusiastic about Breton's role: "Breton brought us boldness, he helped us take a strong stand. He abridged our hesitations and research. I realized that the majority of the problems I encountered had already been resolved by Breton and surrealism. I would say that my meeting with Breton was confirmation of what I had arrived at on my own. This saved us time, let us go quicker, farther. The encounter was extraordinary." Furthermore, even

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as a communist deputy in the later 1940s, Césaire continued to publish poetry for surrealist publications such as *Le Surréalisme en 1947*, an exhibit catalogue edited by André Breton and Marcel Duchamp. His surrealist imagery is undeniable in two poetry collections from that era, *Les Armes Miraculeuses* (Miraculous Weapons) in 1944 and *Soleil cou coupé* (Beheaded Sun) in 1948.

Césaire's essay, "Poetry and Cognition," which he delivered during his seven-month visit to Haiti in 1944, and which appeared in *Tropiques* the following year, represents one of his most systematic statements on the revolutionary nature of poetry. Opening with the simple but provocative proposition that "Poetic knowledge is born in the great silence of scientific knowledge," he then attempts to demonstrate why poetry is the only way to achieve the kind of knowledge we need to move beyond the world's crises. Césaire's embrace of poetry as a method of achieving clairvoyance, of obtaining the knowledge we need to move forward, is crucial for understanding *Discourse*, which appears just five years later. If we think of *Discourse* as a kind of historical prose-poem against the realities of colonialism, then perhaps we should heed Césaire's point that "What presides over the poem is not the most lucid intelligence, the sharpest sensibility or the subtlest feelings, but experience as a whole." This means everything, every history, every future, every dream, every life form, from plant to animal, every creative impulse—plumbed from the depths of the unconscious. If poetry is, indeed, a powerful source of knowledge and revolt, one might expect Césaire to employ it as *Discourse*'s sharpest weapon. And I think most readers will agree that the passages that sing, that sound the war drums, that explode spontaneously, are the most powerful sections of the essay. But for readers who are expecting a systematic critique replete with hypotheses, sufficient evidence, topic sentences, and bullet points, you are bound for disappointment. Consider Césaire's third proposition regarding poetic knowledge: "Poetic knowledge is that in which man spatters the object with all of his mobilized riches."

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Surrealism is also important to the formation of *Discourse* because, like the movements that gave rise to Pan-Africanism and Négritude, it has its own independent anticolonial roots. I am not suggesting that Césaire's critique of colonialism necessarily derived from the surrealists; rather, I want to suggest that the mutual attraction engendered between Césaire (and many other black intellectuals at the time) and the surrealists can be partly explained by affinities in their position toward Empire. Up until the mid-1920s, the European surrealists were largely cultural iconoclasts who made radical pronouncements but displayed little interest in social revolution. But that would change in 1925, when the Paris Surrealist Group and the extreme left of the French Communist Party were drawn together by their support of Abd-el-Krim, leader of the Rif uprising against French colonialism in Morocco. They actively called for the overthrow of French colonial rule. That same year, in an "Open Letter" to writer and French ambassador to Japan, Paul Claudel, the Paris group announced: "We profoundly hope that revolutions, wars, colonial insurrections, will annihilate this Western civilisation whose vermin you defend even in the Orient." Seven years later, the Paris group produced its most militant statement on the colonial question to date. Titled "Murderous Humanitarianism" (1932) and drafted mainly by René Crevel and signed by André Breton, Paul Eluard, Benjamin Peret, Yves Tanguy, and the Martinican surrealists Pierre Yoyotte and J.M. Monnerot, the document is a relentless attack on colonialism, capitalism, the clergy, the black bourgeoisie, and hypocritical liberals. They argue that the very humanism upon which the modern West was built also justified slavery, colonialism, and genocide. And they called for action, noting, "we Surrealists pronounced ourselves in favor of changing the imperialist war, in its chronic and colonial form, into a civil war. Thus we placed our energies at the disposal of the revolution, of the proletariat and its struggles, and defined our attitude towards the colonial problem, and hence towards the color question."

While "Murderous Humanitarianism" certainly resonates with Césaire's critique, he had less faith in the proletariat—the

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European proletariat, that is—than those who signed onto this document. Moreover, as a product of the period following the Second World War, *Discourse* goes one step further by drawing a direct link between the logic of colonialism and the rise of fascism. He provocatively points out that Europeans tolerated "Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that Nazism, that they are responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack." So the real crime of fascism was the application of colonial procedures to white people "which until then had been reserved for the Arabs of Algeria, the coolies of India, and the blacks of Africa" (14). Here we must situate Césaire within a larger context of radical black intellectuals who had come to the same conclusions before the publication of *Discourse*. As Cedric Robinson argues, a group of radical black intellectuals, including W.E.B. DuBois, CLR James, George Padmore, and Oliver Cox, understood fascism not as some aberration from the march of progress, an unexpected right-wing turn, but a logical development of Western Civilization itself. They viewed fascism as a blood relative of slavery and imperialism, global systems rooted not only in capitalist political economy but racist ideologies that were already in place at the dawn of modernity. As early as 1936, Ralph Bunche, then a radical political science professor at Howard University, suggested that imperialism gave birth to fascism. "The doctrine of Fascism," wrote Bunche, "with its extreme jingoism, its exaggerated exaltation of the state and its comic-opera glorification of race, has given a new and greater impetus to the policy of world imperialism which had conquered and subjected to systematic and ruthless exploitation virtually all of the darker populations of the earth." DuBois made some of the clearest statements to this effect: "I knew that Hitler and Mussolini were fighting communism, and using race prejudice to make some white people rich and all colored people poor. But it was not until later that I realized that the colonialism of

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Great Britain and France had exactly the same object and methods as the fascists and the Nazis were trying clearly to use." Later, in *The World and Africa* (1947), he writes: "There was no Nazi atrocity—concentration camps, wholesale maiming and murder, defilement of women or ghastly blasphemy of childhood—which Christian civilization or Europe had not long been practicing against colored folk in all parts of the world in the name of and for the defense of a Superior Race born to rule the world."

The very idea that there was a superior race lay at the heart of the matter, and this is why elements of *Discourse* also drew on Négritude's impulse to recover the history of Africa's accomplishments. Taking his cue from Leo Frobenius's injunction that the "idea of the barbaric Negro is a European invention," Césaire sets out to prove that the colonial mission to "civilize" the primitive is just a smoke screen. If anything, colonialism results in the massive destruction of whole societies—societies that not only function at a high level of sophistication and complexity, but that might offer the West valuable lessons about how we might live together and remake the modern world. Indeed, Césaire's insistence that pre-colonial African and Asian cultures "were not only ante-capitalist . . . but also anti-capitalist" anticipated romantic claims advanced by African nationalist leaders such as Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, and Senghor himself, that modern Africa can establish socialism on the basis of pre-colonial village life.

Discourse was not the first place Césaire made the case for the barbaric West following the path of the civilized African. In his Introduction to Victor Schoelcher's *Esclavage et colonisation*, he wrote:

> The men they took away knew how to build houses, govern empires, erect cities, cultivate fields, mine for metals, weave cotton, forge steel.
>
> Their religion had its own beauty, based on mystical connections with the founder of the city. Their customs were pleasing, built on unity, kindness, respect for age.
>
> No coercion, only mutual assistance, the joy of living, a free acceptance of discipline.
>
> Order—Earnestness—Poetry and Freedom.

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Reading this passage, and the book itself, deeply affected one of Césaire's brightest students, named Frantz Fanon. It was a revelation for him to discover cities in Africa and "accounts of learned blacks." "All of that," he noted in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), "exhumed from the past, spread with its insides out, made it possible for me to find a valid historical place. The white man was wrong, I was not a primitive, not even a half-man, I belonged to a race that had already been working in gold and silver two thousand years ago."

Négritude turned out to be a miraculous weapon in the struggle to overthrow the "barbaric Negro." As Cedric Robinson points out in *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, this was no easy task, since the invention of the Negro—and by extension the fabrication of whiteness and all the racial boundary policing that came with it—required "immense expenditures of psychic and intellectual energies of the West." An entire generation of "Enlightened" European scholars worked hard to wipe out the cultural and intellectual contributions of Egypt and Nubia from European history, to whiten the West in order to maintain the purity of the "European" race. They also stripped all of Africa of any semblance of "civilization," using the printed page to eradicate their history and thus reduce a whole continent and its progeny to little more than beasts of burden or brutish heathens. The result is the fabrication of Europe as a discrete, racially pure entity, solely responsible for modernity, on the one hand, and the fabrication of the Negro on the other.

Yet, despite Césaire's construction of pre-colonial Africa as an aggregation of warm, communal societies, he never calls for a return. Unlike his old friend Senghor, Césaire's Négritude is future-oriented and modern. His position in *Discourse* is unequivocal: "For us the problem is not to make a utopian and sterile attempt to repeat the past, but to go beyond. It is not a dead society that we want to revive. We leave that to those who go in for exoticism . . . . It is a new society that we must create, with the help of our brother slaves, a society rich with all the productive power of modern times, warm with all the fraternity of olden days."

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Then comes the shocking next line:

"For some examples showing that this is possible, we can look to the Soviet Union."

By 1950, of course, Césaire had been a leader in the Communist Party of Martinique for about five years. Under the Communist ticket, he was elected mayor of Fort-de-France as well as Deputy to the French National Assembly. Now, given everything he has written thus far, everything that he has lived, why would he hold up Stalinism circa 1950s as an exemplar of the new society? Why would a great poet and major voice of surrealism and Négritude suddenly join the Communist Party? Actually, once we consider the context of the postwar world, his decision is not shocking at all. First, remember that Communist parties worldwide, especially in Europe, were at their height immediately after the war, and Joe Stalin spent the war years as an ally of liberal democracy. Second, several leading writers and artists committed to radical social change, particularly in the Caribbean and Latin America, became Communists—including Césaire's friends Jacques Romain, Nicolas Guillen, and René Depestre. Third, Césaire, who was reluctant to become involved in politics, discovered early on that he could be effective. Almost as soon as he was elected, Césaire set out to change the status of Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guiana, and Réunion from colonies to "departments" within the French Republic. Departmentalization, he insisted, would put these areas on equal footing with departments in metropolitan France. Césaire's eloquent and passionate arguments led to a law in 1946 resulting in departmentalization. However, his dream that assimilation of the old colonies into the republic would guarantee equal rights turned out to be a pipe dream. In the end, French officials were sent to the colonies in greater numbers, often displacing some of the local black Martinican bureaucrats. By the time he drafted the popularly known third edition of *Discourse* in 1955, he had become an outspoken critic of departmentalization.

Thus, given Césaire's role as Communist leader, we should not be surprised by *Discourse*'s nod to the Soviet Union, or even the final closing lines of the text, in which he names proletar-

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ian revolution as our savior. What is jarring, however, is how incongruous these statements are in relation to the rest of the text. After demonstrating that Europe is a dying civilization, one on the verge of self-destruction (in which the chickens of colonial violence and tyranny have come home to roost while the white working class looks on in silent complicity), he proposes proletarian revolution as the final solution! Yet, throughout the book, he anticipates Fanon, implying that there is nothing worth saving in Europe, that the European working class has too often joined forces with the European bourgeoisie in their support of racism, imperialism, and colonialism, and that the uprisings of the colonized might point the way forward. Ultimately, *Discourse* is a challenge to, or revision of, Marxism; it draws on surrealism and the anti-rationalist ideas of Césaire's early poetry and explorations in Négritude. It is fairly unmaterialist in the way it cries out for new spiritual values to emerge out of the study of what colonialism sought to destroy.

Césaire's position vis-à-vis Marxism becomes even clearer less than one year after the third edition of *Discourse* appeared. In October 1956, Césaire pens his famous letter to Maurice Thorez, Secretary General of the French Communist Party, tendering his resignation from the party. Besides its stinging rebuke of Stalinism, the heart of the letter dealt with the colonial question—not just the Party's policies toward the colonies but the colonial relationship between the metropolitan CP and the Martinican party. Arguing that people of color need to exercise self-determination, he warned against treating the "colonial question . . . as a subsidiary part of some more important global matter." Racism, in other words, cannot be subordinate to the class struggle. His letter is an even bolder, more direct assertion of third-world unity than *Discourse*. Although he still identifies as a Marxist and is still open to alliances, he cautions that there "are no allies by divine rights." If following the Communist Party "pillages our most vivifying friendships, wastes the bond that weds us to other West Indian islands, the tie that makes us Africa's child, then I say communism has served us ill in having us swap a living brotherhood

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for what looks to have the features of the coldest of all chill abstractions." More important, Césaire's investment in a third-world revolt paving the way for a new society certainly anticipates Fanon. He had practically given up on Europe and the old humanism and its claims of universality, opting instead to re-define the "universal" in a way that did not privilege Europe. Césaire explains, "I'm not going to entomb myself in some strait particularism. But I don't intend either to become lost in a fleshless universalism . . . . I have a different idea of a universal. It is of a universal rich with all that is particular, rich with all the particulars there are, the deepening of each particular, the coexistence of them all."

What Césaire articulates in *Discourse*, and more explicitly in his letter to Thorez, distills the spirit that swept through African intellectual circles in the age of decolonization. This pervasive spirit was what Négritude was all about then; it was never a simple matter of racial essentialism. Critic, scholar, and filmmaker Manthia Diawara beautifully captures the atmosphere of the era and, implicitly, what these radical critiques of the colonial order, such as *Discourse on Colonialism*, meant to a new generation: "The idea that Négritude was bigger even than Africa, that we were part of an international moment which held the promise of universal emancipation, that our destiny coincided with the universal freedom of workers and colonized people worldwide—all this gave us a bigger and more important identity than the ones previously available to us through kinship, ethnicity, and race . . . . The awareness of our new historical mission freed us from what we regarded in those days as the archaic identities of our fathers and their religious entrapments; it freed us from race and banished our fear of the whiteness of French identity. To be labeled the saviors of humanity, when only recently we had been colonized and despised by the world, gave us a feeling of righteousness, which bred contempt for capitalism, racialism of all origins, and tribalism."

In light of recent events—genocide in East Africa, the collapse of democracy throughout the continent, the isolation of Cuba, the overthrow of progressive movements throughout

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the so-called third world—some might argue that the moment of truth has already passed, that Césaire and Fanon's predictions proved false. We're facing an era where fools are calling for a renewal of colonialism, where descriptions of violence and instability draw on the very colonial language of "barbarism" and "backwardness" that Césaire critiques in *Discourse.* But this is all a mystification; the fact is, while colonialism in its formal sense might have been dismantled, the colonial state has not. Many of the problems of democracy are products of the old colonial state whose primary difference is the presence of black faces. It has to do with the rise of a new ruling class—the class Fanon warned us about—who are content with mimicking the colonial masters, whether they are the old-school British or French officers, the new jack U.S. corporate rulers, or the Stalinists whose sympathy for the "backward" countries often mirrored the very colonial discourse Césaire exposes.

As the true radicals of postcolonial theory will tell you, we are hardly in a "postcolonial" moment. The official apparatus might have been removed, but the political, economic, and cultural links established by colonial domination still remain with some alterations. *Discourse* is less concerned with the specifics of political economy than with a way of thinking. The lesson here is that colonial domination required a whole way of thinking, a discourse in which everything that is advanced, good, and civilized, is defined and measured in European terms. *Discourse* calls on the world to move forward as rapidly as possible, and yet calls for the overthrow of a master class's ideology of progress, one built on violence, destruction, genocide. Both Fanon and Césaire warn the colored world not to follow Europe's footsteps, and not to go back to the ancient way, but to carve out a new direction altogether. What we've been witnessing, however (and here I must include Césaire's own beloved Martinique, where he still holds forth as mayor of Fort-de-France) hardly reflects the imagination and vision captured in the brief pages of *Discourse.* The same old political parties, the same armies, the same methods of labor exploitation, the same education, the same tactics of incarceration,

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exiling, snuffing out artists and intellectuals who dare to imagine a radically different way of living, who dare to invent the marvelous before our very eyes.

In the end, *Discourse* was never intended to be a road map or a blueprint for revolution. It is poetry and therefore revolt. It is an act of insurrection, drawn from Césaire's own miraculous weapons, molded and shaped by his work with *Tropiques* and their challenge to the Vichy regime, by his imbibing of European culture and his sense of alienation from both France and his native land. It is a rising, a blow to the master who appears as owner and ruler, teacher and comrade. It is revolutionary graffiti painted in bold strokes across the great texts of Western Civilization; it is a hand grenade tossed with deadly accuracy, clearing the field so that we might write a new history with what's left standing. *Discourse* is hardly a dead document about a dead order. If anything, it is a call for us to plumb the depths of the imagination for a different way forward. Just as Césaire drew on Comte de Lautréamont's *Chants de Maldoror* to illuminate the cannibalistic nature of capitalism and the power of poetic knowledge, *Discourse* offers new insights into the consequences of colonialism and a model for dreaming a way out of our postcolonial predicament. While we still need to overthrow all vestiges of the old colonial order, destroying the old is just half the battle.

NOTES

1. The Monthly Review version is a reprint of the revised and expanded third edition put out by Présence Africaine in 1955. The first edition was published by Éditions Réclame.
2. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 102.
3. Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 119. A compelling defense of Césaire's *Discourse*, which has influenced my thinking on this text's relation to postcolonial studies, is Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London: Verso, 1997). He argues that *Discourse* not only anticipated Fanon, but works by Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, Wilson Harris, Chinua Achebe, and Chinweizu.
4. See, for example, A. James Arnold, *Modernism and Négritude: The Poetry and Poetics of Aimé Césaire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981); M. A. M. Ngal, *Aimé Césaire: Un Homme à la Récherche d'une Patrie* (Dakar: Nouvelles Éditions Africaines, 1983); Lilyan Kesteloot and B. Kotchy, *Aimé Césaire, L'Homme et L'Oeuvre* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1973); Jane L. Pallister, *Aimé Césaire* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991); Susan Frutkin, *Aimé Césaire: Black Between Worlds* (Miami: Center for Advanced International Studies, 1973).

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5. Arnold, *Modernism and Négritude*, pp. 1-8, quote from page 8.
6. Quote from "An Interview with Aimé Césaire" appended at the end of *Discourse*, Arnold, *Modernism and Négritude*, pp. 8-9; on black diasporic intellectuals in Paris, see Tyler Stovall, *Paris Noir: African-Americans in the City of Light* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996); Brent Edwards, "Black Globality: The International Shape of Black Intellectual Culture," (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1997).
7. Maryse Conde, *Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal*; Césaire, *Analyse Critique* (Paris: Hatier, 1978); Norman Shapiro, ed., *Négritude: Black Poetry from Africa and the Caribbean* (New York: October House, 1970), p. 224; Pallister, *Aimé Césaire*, pp. xiii-xiv.
8. Arnold, *Modernism and Négritude*, pp. 12-13.
9. "Lettre du Lieutenant de Vaisseau Bayle, chef du service d'information au directeur de la revue *Tropiques*, Fort-de-France, May 10, 1943" and "Reponse de *Tropiques* à M. le Lieutenant de Vaisseau Bayle, Fort-de-France, May 12, 1943," (signed Aimé Césaire, Suzanne Césaire, Georges Gratiant, Aristide Maugée, René Ménil, Lucie Thesée), *Tropiques*, vol. 1, ed. by Aimé Césaire [fascimile reproduction] (Paris: Éditions Jean-Michel Place, 1978), Documents-Annexes, pp. xxxvi-xxxviii.
10. See Michael Richardson, ed., *Refusal of the Shadow*, pp. 7-15, 69-182; Franklin Rosemont, ed., *André Breton—What is Surrealism?: Selected Writings* (New York: Pathfinder, 1978), pp. 83-92; Arnold, *Modernism and Négritude*, pp. 12-13.
11. Quote from Penelope Rosemont, ed., *Surrealist Women: An International Anthology* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), p. 137; Franklin Rosemont, "Suzanne Césaire: In the Light of Surrealism," (unpublished paper in author's possession).
12. Penelope Rosemont, ed., *Surrealist Women*, pp. 136-37. "Surrealism and Us: 1943" is also reprinted in Michael Richardson, ed., *Refusal of the Shadow: Surrealism and the Caribbean*, trans. by Michael Richardson and Krzysztof Fijalkowski (London: Verso, 1996), pp. 123-26, but I prefer Rosemont's translation
13. Brent Hayes Edwards offers an illuminating description of Césaire's poetic challenge to surrealism. While he sees Césaire's work as a departure from Surrealism, I like to think of it as a transformation. Brent Hayes Edwards, "Ethnics of Surrealism," *Transition* 78 (1999), pp. 132-34.
14. Jacqueline Leiner, "Entretien avec A.C.," in *Tropiques*, vol. 1, ed. by Aimé Césaire [fascimile reproduction] (Paris: Éditions Jean-Michel Place, 1978).
15. Pallister, *Aimé Césaire*, pp. 29-33.
16. Reprinted as "Poetry and Knowledge" in Michael Richardson, ed., *Refusal of the Shadow*, pp. 134-145.
17. Rosemont, ed., *André Breton—What is Surrealism?*, pp. 36-37; Maurice Nadeau, *The History of Surrealism*, trans. by Richard Howard (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989, orig. 1944), p. 117; "Murderous Humanitarianism," reprinted in *Race Traitor—Special Issue—Surrealism: Revolution Against Whiteness* 9 (Summer 1998), pp. 67-69. The document first appeared in Nancy Cunard, ed., *Negro: An Anthology* (New York, 1996 reprint, orig. 1934).
18. Cedric J. Robinson, "Fascism and the Response of Black Radical Theorists," (unpublished paper in author's possession); Cedric J. Robinson, "Fascism and the Intersection of Capitalism, Racialism, and Historical Consciousness," *Humanities in Society* 3, no. 6 (Autumn 1983), pp. 325-49; Cedric J. Robinson, "The African Diaspora and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis," *Race and Class* 27, no. 2 (Autumn 1985), pp. 51-65; W.E.B. DuBois, *The Autobiography of W.E.B. DuBois*, ed. by Herbert Aptheker (New York, 1968), pp. 305-306; Ralph J. Bunche, "French and British Imperialism in West Africa," *Journal of Negro History* 21, no. 1 (January 1936), p. 31; W.E.B. DuBois, *The World and Africa* (New York: International Publishers, 1947), p. 23.

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19. Césaire, Senghor, and their colleagues in the Négritude movement had been fascinated with Leo Frobenius, the German irrationalist whose massive ethnography, *Histoire de la civilisation Africaine,* provided a powerful defense of African civilization. See Suzanne Césaire, "Leo Frobenius and the Problem of Civilization [1941]," in Michael Richardson, ed., *Refusal of the Shadow,* pp. 82-87; L.S. Senghor, "The Lessons of Leo Frobenius," in *Leo Frobenius: An Anthology,* ed. E. Haberland (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1973), p. vii; Jacqueline Leiner, "Entretien avec A.C."
20. Aimé Césaire "Introduction to Victor Schoelcher," *Esclavage et colonisation* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948), p. 7; also quoted in Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), pp. 130-31.
21. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* p. 130.
22. Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).
23. Arnold, *Modernism and Négritude,* p. 14, pp. 169-70; Susan Frutkin, *Aimé Césaire: Black Between Worlds* (Miami: Center for Advanced International Studies, 1973), pp. 26-27.
24. Aimé Césaire, Letter to Maurice Thorez (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1957), p. 6, p. 7, pp. 14-15.
25. Manthia Diawara, *In Search of Africa* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 6-7. Although the specific topic of Diawara's essay is Jean Paul Sartre's "Black Orpheus," he is speaking generally here about a whole body of literature that includes works by Césaire and Fanon.

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Are New Trade Wars Looming?

by William K. Tabb

I have agreed to talk on the question "Are New Trade Wars Looming?" The answer is yes, but I must also tell you that I think this is the wrong question. What we are really interested in is why trade wars occur and where the economic philosophy we call *protectionism* comes from. A major cause of the world-wide war and depression that crippled much of the first half of the twentieth century was imperialism and the rivalry of nations for trade, commodities, raw materials, and labor—this produced protectionism. I want to suggest the special importance of finance capital in this process, both earlier in the twentieth century and now. Rather than worrying about trade wars, we should concentrate on the power of capital's control over our political economy, especially the role of international financiers.

We need to look at the parallels to the situation leading to the Great Depression, the adoption of the Smoot-Hawley Tariff in the United States, and the dramatic decline of world

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trade as a result of protectionism in the 1930s, but also the important differences between the situation then and now. As Charlene Bershefsky, the U.S. Trade Representative, said in a speech on January 29, 1999, "despite a shock nearly as great as the one that brought the Smoot-Hawley tariff, with 40 percent of the world in recession and six major economies suffering contraction of 6 percent or more, we as yet see no broad reversion to protectionism."

Trade conflicts today range from the so-called "banana war" between the United States and the European Union to the demand by the U.S. steel industry for protection from unfair foreign competition. The banana war reminds us that much of what is called protectionism has little to do with the needs of U.S. labor which, after all, does not produce bananas. The dispute arises because a major donor to the Democratic Party runs a company that wants to sell more bananas (produced in Central America) in Europe, where preference is given to bananas from Europe's former colonies. The steel dispute is more the sort of conflict that people have in mind when they worry about protectionism and trade wars.

The U.S. steel industry is facing what it sees as a deluge of imports from Japan, Russia, Brazil, and Indonesia which, it is alleged, are selling steel below cost in the United States. Steel is the focal point, but there are lots of other industries in which there is excess capacity on a global scale. Industries with high fixed costs come out ahead, selling at a loss so long as revenues cover their variable costs, and so are likely to export below cost, even if this produces protectionist responses and even trade wars.

But notice two things: First, the list of offending steel exporters—Japan, which has had a stagnant economy for much of the decade (having overinvested in the 1980s and become stuck with excess capacity), and then the three large troubled economies: Russia, Indonesia, and Brazil (which have liberalized capital flows, received vast capital inflows, and then seen their economies undermined by speculative excesses, unsustainable debt levels, capital flight, dramatic currency depreciation, and economic crisis). These countries, despite U.S.

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and International Monetary Fund (IMF) "rescues," find it difficult or impossible to balance their budgets and pay their debts. They also find that the austerity forced upon them by the agents of international finance means that domestic recession-depression deepens. How did they get into the messes they are in?

Second, how did the excess capacity develop (not only in steel but in everything from hogs to autos) and why the cycle of speculative lending and default, which has produced financial crisis? While there are particular answers, like anticipation of perpetual growth of Asian markets (the so-called Pacific Century, with Asia as the engine of global growth); financial deregulation in the absence of adequate safeguards and ill-conceived loan policies (the presumption being that there can be adequate safeguards); and crony capitalism (the fact that elites ripped off innocent foreign investors and then maximized short-term gain at the expense of long-term stability), these are only pieces of a larger equation. It is important to note that such manias, panics, and crises have always been part of the way capitalism works. They are regular occurrences, even if they are unpredictable in terms of exact timing, seriousness, and duration. They arise as part of the uneven nature of capitalist development, in which innovations unleash rapid growth, producing overinvestment, causing firms to overreach (in terms of the expectations they have concerning the future realization of profitable sales) and then become unable to service debt. As overinvestment reaches its peak, speculation in equity and property markets reaches unsustainable proportions, and these bubbles burst. These cycles are superimposed on the secular development of capitalism—a process in which all parts of the world are brought into a single market and a universalization of the properties of capitalist social relations occurs. Some historical discussion can help clarify the essential features of such cycles, and the role financial orthodoxy has played in the misinterpretation of their nature, and in the advancement of punitive (and finally counterproductive) solutions—harmful to the vast majority but in the immediate self-interest of the international financiers.

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Historical Parallels

In the second half of the nineteenth century, important innovations in transportation and communication (the railroad and the telegraph, iron-hulled coal powered ships and transatlantic cable) reduced the cost of doing business over great distances. Developments in metallurgy and chemistry in the latter part of the century produced manufacturing capacity to match the increased extent of the market, leading to imperialist rivalries and the First World War. In the interwar period, efforts to re-establish gold parities at pre-war levels and to extract reparations from the war's losers and war loans from allies contributed to a severe balance of payment crisis, slow growth, high unemployment, and an inability to address the various imbalances produced by an attempted return to normalcy, leading to a desire for protection from forces seemingly beyond the control of national policymakers. As Broadus Mitchell, a historian who has chronicled the period, notes: "Overproduction of raw materials was matched by surplus output, or surplus capacity, in important industrial fields. High tariffs and other expressions of economic nationalism were the consequences .... Debtor countries that could get no more loans felt they must expand their exports and contract their imports. Invasion of others' markets and defense of their own alternated in speeding restrictions on world trade."

Protectionism comes close to the end of the story, not the beginning. To say trade wars are bad and to be avoided ignores the more crucial matter of the difficulties that create the conditions out of which trade wars become likely, if not inevitable. The end of the First World War found the global economy with excess capacities stimulated by the needs of wartime, a peace which redrew the map of Europe (creating small, new states that attempted to protect their autonomy), and a situation in which established powers (that had experienced differential productivity growth) gained or lost economic capacity as a result of war, and disordered exchange rates produced disequilibria that proved difficult to set right. Any stability that existed in the 1920s depended on a particular

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balance of international capital flows. When the Fed raised interest rates in the United States, this balance was disrupted, and the prevalent view since the end of the First World War (that the United States neither understood nor was very interested in the global financial fragility of the period) was confirmed. The Great Depression can be understood as the outcome of an inability to produce a financial regime capable of sustaining economic growth and stability. The same troubling processes are underway in our own time.

Another historian and close student of the interwar period, Max Gideonse, writes: "From the enactment of the emergency tariff of 1921 to the dollar devaluation program of late 1933, American leadership in world affairs lacked even the rudiments of effectiveness, and was, for the most part, a depressing mixture of incompetence, irresponsibility, and inertia." Self-interest is a powerful blinder and justifier of intellectual argument and policy certitude. Today, as in the interwar years, financial orthodoxy is blind to the causes of economic crisis. In part, this is because the class interests it defends benefitted and benefit from the damage it inflicts on others.

Did U.S. policies—from its response to the Latin American debt crisis in the early 1980s to the policy advice to the new Russian state (in its transition from communism) and the East Asian financial crisis (starting in 1997)—all equally demonstrate a self-serving stance that did incalculable harm to the economies involved and to the world economy more generally? I will make the case that this is in fact the proper interpretation, and that those concerned with the possibilities of coming trade wars would do well to consider the preconditions in policies demanded by the American Treasury Department on behalf of U.S. financial institutions and enforced by the IMF and other agencies. Many of the particular policies in question are the same in the last part of the twentieth century as they were in its early decades.

Orthodoxy argues for the automaticity and efficiency of free capital markets. The major difference is that, in the earlier period, this was presented in terms of the presumed benefits

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of the gold standard. Even today, some analysts look back at the era in which the gold standard regime dominated as the golden age of international finance. They see the failure to properly restore the gold standard after the First World War as responsible for the Great Depression. But the gold standard itself was the principal threat to financial stability and economic prosperity between the wars. It was a large part of the problem and not the solution. Adherence to the gold standard forced contractionary policies, which turned recession into depression.

The gold standard was part of an ideological stance toward laissez-faire capitalism, which was hegemonic and insisted that any government interference with market forces was bound to do more harm than good. As a result, nations were held back from taking actions that might have averted or reduced the impact of crisis. The political power of finance led to economic outcomes favored by bankers but harmful to societies at large. The same may be said of the current period. The self-interested actions of national governments and the false belief in the gold standard's automaticity led to a failure to reach agreement on the need for (and the specifics of) central bank cooperation. The globalization of finance from the 1970s, like the effort to reimpose the international gold standard or gold exchange standard in the interwar years, constrained national policymakers and led to the demand for protectionism.

After the Great Depression and the carnage of the Second World War (a conflict which owed much to Germany's inability to recover in the interwar years—the result, in significant measure, of the demand for reparations that perpetuated economic suffering in Germany and paved the way for Hitler), it was widely understood that avoiding a replay when peace was restored would involve a very different international financial regime. After the postwar era of national Keynesianism, the forces of transnational capital have once again gained an upper hand. The return to pre-Keynesian orthodoxy under the prompting of the U.S. Treasury and IMF officials has forced counterproductive policies on Russia, Indonesia, and

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Brazil, among others, and produced fear of a global crisis of the dimension of the Great Depression.

The tension between free capital movements and free trade was well understood by the architects of the post-Second World War Bretton Woods regime who saw free trade, economic growth, and full employment as dependent on the control of capital. It was understood, in the 1940s and 1950s, that abolishing exchange controls would make it exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, for any government which might come to power to pursue full employment and welfare state redistributive policies without provoking capital flight. Industrial capital, which dominated in the early postwar years, understood this and, sold on the need for Keynesian policies, favored continued capital controls. As the financial sector recovered, and multinational corporations came to hold a more globalist view, the establishment in the United States moved to more greatly favor free capital mobility. England, seeing its future as a financial center, supported the United States in this resolve. In the 1940s, bankers arguing along these lines for a more open financial order made the case that the move would prevent governments from meddling with market forces, but they were overruled by industrial capital, which saw merit in Keynesian stimulus that needed capital controls to be effective. Internationalization was followed by policy changes that favored greater freedom for international speculators.

The United States and Britain, by creating the Euromarket, undermined the Bretton Woods system, unilaterally offering mobile financial traders the ability to operate without regulation. Thus, they forced other financial centers to liberalize markets or see their business and capital migrate—a process of competitive deregulation that parallels the competitive devaluation policies of the 1930s. It was the political choice of the United States, most significantly in its irresponsibility in the 1960s, to unleash inflation and make others bear its cost, and then unilaterally to change the rules at the expense of foreign central banks and others who believed the U.S. commitment to its fixed exchange rate. It was also the opportunist

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choice of Great Britain to pursue a deregulation strategy that would solidify its position as a global financial center.

The Contemporary Situation

In the 1990s, these forces have become even stronger under New Democrat Bill Clinton and New Labour leader Tony Blair, both of whom favor policies of financial openness and a deregulated international monetary regime. Clinton's ability to win the decisive backing of Democratic Party supporters among Wall Street investment bankers was crucial to his bid for president. The head of Goldman Sachs & Company, Robert E. Rubin (one of these Wall Street supporters), became his treasury secretary and the most important figure in his administration. Clinton, it should be noted, followed up the policies of the Republican Bush and Reagan Administrations with impressive enthusiasm.

Under the Clinton Administration, there was an expansion of such priorities. Clinton's Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown and his successors were almost continuously on the road, pushing American exports and demanding financial market liberalization. Clinton created the National Economic Council as a counterpart to the National Security Council. Mr. Rubin, as its head, guided the global ideological shift to unrestricted financial flows to the great profit of financial service firms such as Goldman Sachs. Asia was a particular target for this full-court press. Continued access to U.S. markets was held hostage to liberalization of financial markets. Korea, for example, was sponsored by the United States for membership in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the rich nations club, in exchange for accelerated liberalization of its financial markets. The Koreans let their companies borrow abroad even though such loans might (and, as it turned out, did) make their corporations vulnerable to a panic-driven outflow (which occurred at the end of 1997). The cost of the business won by U.S. banks and brokerage firms was paid by the Asian economies. Secretary Rubin and his assistant (and then his successor as Treasury Secretary), Laurence Summers, also pressed the IMF to

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amend its charter to make free capital movements a central goal in IMF negotiations with member countries forced to seek balance of payments assistance.

The leaders of Asia, Latin America, and even continental Europe have become increasingly willing to articulate the view that recent financial crises have been caused by unregulated cross-border financial trading. Financial liberalization, in the words of Mahathir Mohamad, Malaysia's Prime Minister, has driven forces resulting in the demise of the East Asian miracle. "The great Asian Tigers are no more. Reduced to whimpering and begging, they are but a former shadow of themselves .... From being miracle economies we have now become impoverished nations." And who can disagree? Percival Patterson, Prime Minister of Jamaica, is not alone in criticizing the way the IMF has handled the crisis. "As a lender of last resort, the IMF remains unsuited to that role .... within its limited resources, it did bail out the creditors, which leaves the debtors in the lurch." Resentment at U.S. policies and the gains the United States has reaped from its own and IMF policies has led increasingly to a backlash against the U.S. model, which saves Wall Street speculators while sacrificing the people of the third world. If they now desperately increase exports and there is talk of "trade wars," we need to understand the larger context. It is not so very different today than what it was in the early decades of the twentieth century, when similar policies of orthodoxy (which benefitted finance capital at the expense of global economic growth and stability) were dominant. It appears that we have learned little from these earlier experiences and, in many ways, we appear to be replicating the conditions and policies which produced the Great Depression. This does not mean that history will be repeated or repeated in the same way, but the earlier patterns and the power of orthodoxy have returned. And they are doing grave damage.

Increasingly, this is recognized—not only by third-world leaders such as the prime ministers of Malaysia and Jamaica, but even by many U.S. policymakers and former officials now free to speak frankly to the press. As Kristof and Sanger write

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in an important *New York Times* series summarizing interviews with administration and former administration officials: In retrospect, the United States was "insufficiently aware of the kind of chaos that financial liberalization could provoke." Mickey Kantor, the former trade representative and commerce secretary, is quoted in this 1999 series as saying that "[i]t would be a legitimate criticism to say that we should have been more nuanced, more foresighted that this could happen." Such rapid liberalization without proper regulation and legal rules, in his view, was like "building a skyscraper with no foundation."

It may be argued that when the buildings began to crumble and fall, the United States and the IMF demanded policies that made conditions worse. The austerity they demanded, as well as the high interest rates and the continued currency convertibility, enabled foreign investors to get their funds out, while locals in the affected countries bore the disproportionate burden of the devastating adjustments that followed. The Indonesians, Koreans, and others lost their businesses, workers lost their jobs, and foreign banks were rewarded with sharply higher interest rates and government guarantees against default, which came at taxpayer expense. As Milton Friedman commented, "The United States does give foreign aid. But it is a different kind of foreign aid. It only goes through countries like Thailand to Bankers Trust."

Currently, with the remarkable performance of the U.S. economy (compared to that of the rest of the world), Mr. Rubin, who knew enough to quit while ahead, enjoys a domestic reputation as one of the best treasury secretaries the United States has had. Internationally, he is widely criticized as responsible for encouraging policies that have produced instability and economic crisis by forcing financial liberalization. Rubin stood virtually alone in opposing efforts to curb the volatility of capital markets (his only significant support coming from the British). It is also widely understood that, until now, the financial centers of Wall Street and its counterpart, the City of London, have profited substantially from this turmoil. The Europeans, Japanese, and third world countries (which favor

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some form of international agreement on new modes of managing international financial markets) have been unable to budge the United States or to successfully oppose its will. Should Anglo-American financial markets collapse as well, this stance will be seen even in the United States, as the self-serving policies of what Columbia University economist Jagdish Bhagwati has called the Wall Street-Treasury-IMF complex and the financiers who run policy once again face universal criticism, as they did in the years preceding the Great Depression.

Even in the absence of such a meltdown, it should still be evident that it was the forced liberalization of financial markets that led to the crises—not only in Asia, but also in Russia and Latin America. Now it also produces the huge U.S. trade deficit, provoking protectionist demands. To expect trade wars as severe as those experienced in the first half of the twentieth century is, however, a mistake.

We need to understand that the world's economies are now so interpenetrated by transnational control that Korea's or Japan's problems are more likely to lead to the takeover of their large (but weakened) corporate giants by U.S. capital than to trade wars between nationalist capitalist classes. The extent of foreign ownership is substantial. Foreign-owned enterprises in France, for example (which we tend to think of as so nationalistic), account for 25 percent of industrial production. 40 percent of the United Kingdom's exports are by foreign firms. By the late 1980s, the flow of foreign direct investment into the United States was exceeding the outflow. Strategies for promoting national champions has given way to strategic alliances, if not outright merger with foreign rivals, to increase market power and to pursue economies of scale to offset the huge research and development costs, designing new products and marketing them on a global scale. By the early 1990s, the top twenty-five multinational corporations all had sales over twenty-five billion dollars. The largest, General Motors, had sales larger than the gross domestic product of all but twenty-one nations in 1992. Lists of countries by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and companies by sales showed Toyota's sales exceeding the GDP of Portugal and Poland, IBM

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exceeding Venezuela, and Unilever exceeding New Zealand. The growth of multinationals or transnationals, and of direct foreign investment, means that such firms operate in a very large number of countries and derive a high proportion of their assets (workers and profits) from locations beyond their home countries—so that trade wars become counterproductive for the dominant economic actors in the globalized economy.

Increasingly, the danger is not old-style trade wars but the greater dominance of these corporate giants over the economic lives of working people everywhere. With concentrated oligopolistic structure, a relatively small number of giants come to dominate world markets. There is growing awareness, as Jeffrey Garten, the dean of the Yale School of Management and former Clinton Administration official, writes: "Megacompanies are almost beyond the law." They have the money to run legal circles around regulators and to intimidate smaller rivals. They can buy political influence, both with campaign contributions and by threatening job loss among electorates in jurisdictions in which labor, environmental, or tax law is not to their liking. They can demand subsidies and shift social cost to workers and governments.

This is not to say that there will not be demands for protectionism and even the adoption of protectionist policies. But such protectionism is less likely to lead to the devastating trade wars some now fear, and is likely to be exercised by the strong, who are able to get away with unilateral exercise of discriminatory policies. This is amply demonstrated in the case of the steel industry.

In late February 1998, an agreement was reached between the Clinton Administration and Russia to strictly control the growth of Russian steel exports to the United States. Russia will cut back to the level of sales before the sharp fall in the value of the *ruble*. That the Russians agreed to this when steel exports are such a huge source of (scarce) hard currency is a measure of the leverage the United States has over Russia. It does not really matter that World Trade Organization (WTO) rules forbid this kind of managed trade agreement or volun-

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tary export restraint. Russia is not a member of the WTO, but if the United States had not forced such an agreement from the Russians, it could have levied a steep tariff on its steel exports, which could have stopped them. Russia, which is negotiating for more aid from the IMF, knows that it is in no position to anger the United States. Brazil and Japan are also unlikely to retaliate against the Commerce Department's recent decision to impose huge tariffs on their hot-rolled steel sent to the United States.

If, as the balance of trade continues to widen, unemployment rises in the United States, we are likely to see more demands for protection by workers fearing job loss. Companies with their backs to the wall will blame unfair foreign competition. Such nationalist appeals will receive a sympathetic ear, especially if they are from a large, well-organized industry able to flex political muscle.

Freedom of capital without social regulation unleashes painful costs as governments, workers, and weaker competitors are forced into a painful deflation, and orthodox policymakers (and the financial interests that have such influence over their direction) dictate that the interests of speculative capital come before the needs of ordinary people and the stability of economies. The cost the world is currently paying for such policies is inordinately high and may grow more severe.

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The Road Not Taken

by Michael D. Yates

Paul Buhle, *Taking Care of Business: Samuel Gompers, George Meany, Lane Kirkland, and the Tragedy of American Labor* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999), $18, 315 pp.; Mike Parker & Martha Gruelle, *Democracy is Power: Rebuilding Unions from the Bottom Up* (Detroit: Labor Notes, 1999), $17, 255 pp.

In a very well-known passage, Marx said, "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past." Elsewhere, he said, "The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living." These words of wisdom provide us with a good entry point into a review of these two exceptional books.

Paul Buhle's *Taking Care of Business* provides chapter and verse for the second quotation. Much has been written about the rise of the "New Voice" leadership in the AFL-CIO which,

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in 1995, began a sort of "revolution from above" to reinvigorate a moribund labor movement. The triumvirate of John Sweeney, Richard Trumka, and Linda Chavez-Thompson engendered new hopes among progressives, with their bold focus on organizing new workers, more independent politics, and coalition-building. In the context of the immediate past, these choices have been a wonderful breath of fresh air and hopefully will open the door to future renewal. To date, however, the results have been somewhat disappointing. Union density has not risen, and the new leadership has failed so far to change substantially the conservative culture dominant in most unions.

Buhle suggests that we must look at the "New Voice" leadership as intimately, if unwillingly, tied to the entire history of the U.S. labor movement. He says, "[a] central experience within labor history, and a widely acknowledged problem for today's labor movement, is the suffocating authority of the labor bureaucracy." A bureaucracy, he adds, with a "self-serving acceptance of existing social arrangements ...." Buhle traces the history of the U.S. labor bureaucracy (the development of which he characterizes as "the tragedy of American labor") by carefully examining the lives of three presidents of our national labor federations. What he finds is that the "traditions of all the dead generations [Samuel Gompers, George Meany, and Lane Kirkland]" do indeed "weigh like a nightmare" on Sweeney, Trumka, and Chavez-Thompson. Yet the first three did "make their own history." They made certain choices when they could have made others, and the working people of the nation have suffered considerably as a consequence. As Buhle makes clear, the "New Voice" has its work cut out for it.

The United States differed greatly from the capitalist states of Western Europe from its inception. It had a radically democratic Constitution, which placed great emphasis on individual liberty. Skilled white workers believed that they had helped make this new nation and, therefore, should not be denied their rights as free men. They protested vigorously and organized aggressively when the consolidation of capitalism inevitably began to erode their liberties. At the same time, there were

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features of the new nation that confronted their organization with choices unlike those facing workers elsewhere. Foremost was the existence of slavery, and the racism this engendered within the working class—a racism used to great effect by the Democratic Party whenever it needed to woo the working-class vote. Antagonism to newly arrived immigrants was certainly connected to racism; it made it easier for skilled workers to blame immigrants for stealing their jobs (something that was seldom true) than to fault the detailed division of labor and mechanization (essential elements of the accumulation of capital) that were the true villains. Insistence by women that they had the same rights as men, the logical consequence of the rhetoric of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, caused further frictions among workers. (The same claim was made by blacks and immigrants.) The great strength of U.S. capitalism and the corollary power of the state combined not only to antagonize *any* labor movement, but also to provide the wherewithal to co-opt and bribe labor leaders and offer the semblance of middle-class affluence to at least a part of the working class.

The choices facing working-class movements in the United States included the following: Should workers aggressively oppose slavery? (After the Civil War, this became a question of actively embracing the freed slaves as an integral part of the working class.) Should workers be separately organized by skill? Should all immigrant workers be courted as equal members of labor organizations? Should the equality of women be championed? Should work in the home be recognized as labor equivalent to any other? What should be the view of worker organizations toward the state? Toward war? Toward imperialism? (Including the internal imperialism directed at Native Americans). Were the benefits capitalism might confer on a few workers worth the misery of the rest?

As Buhle shows, these were all questions actively debated among workers and within their organizations. Throughout our history, there have been individuals and groups arguing that only a broadly inclusive labor movement, conceiving of the class struggle in terms of culture and the nature of work

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as well as the labor market, had any hope of successfully combating the tremendous power of U.S. capital. These have included some of the early labor abolitionists, radical women's rights activists, certain members of the First International, the Knights of Labor, the Western Federation of Miners, the IWW, parts of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), and some communists. The standard wisdom of labor historians has it that these benighted people and organizations thought and acted so much against the grain of U.S. society that they were doomed to failure, their undeniable bravery notwithstanding. According to this view, only a conservative and pragmatic labor movement, one that accepted the main contours of U.S. capitalism, could hope to survive in such rugged terrain. Such a movement, of course, did develop, namely the American Federation of Labor (AFL), under the guidance of Buhle's first protagonist, Samuel Gompers.

Buhle rejects this view of the AFL as pragmatic success story. While claiming to speak for all workers, the AFL instead consciously chose to organize only the skilled, white, male minority of the working class. And its leaders chose to attack any person or organization that it saw as a threat to this minority and to engage in any tactics that might improve its material circumstances. The demands of black workers, women, and immigrants threatened Gompers' domain, so he opposed them, often with a racism that has to be read to be believed. Organizing unskilled workers was not seen as significantly beneficial to skilled workers, and they were thus ignored or condemned as morally unfit for union membership. Since radicals were the most likely to advocate a broad, class-conscious labor movement (one which would by necessity oppose the skilled, white, male labor aristocracy or at least seek to dilute its power), they had to be opposed by whatever means necessary, including cooperating with the police, the State Department, the FBI and, eventually, the CIA. If corrupt and racist urban political machines (usually Democrats) controlled high-paying construction jobs, then they had to be supported by the AFL or, better yet, coaxed by the threat of strikes and boycotts to share the spoils of corruption with labor's

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leaders. If U.S. imperialism and war might benefit AFL member unions and their leaders (and add to the prestige of Gompers or Meany or Kirkland) and at the same time cast their radical critics in a bad light, then these must be supported at all costs. If (sometimes corrupt) cooperation with employers was necessary to secure work for members (or bribes for leaders to ensure "labor peace"), then such cooperation had to be endorsed.

To "succeed," in other words, Gompers and his successors *always* chose the path of least resistance. But in a society marked by profound inequality, racism, sexism, imperialism, and dedication to vicious competition and rugged individualism, this strategy inevitably led to the development of an exclusivist, rigidly bureaucratic, undemocratic, and often corrupt labor "movement." Once such a movement "succeeded," it was in the direct material and status interests of its leaders to prevent it from changing. The AFL culture nurtured by Gompers who, despite his many negative qualities, had risen from the ranks of workers and actually organized them, ultimately gave rise to a self-generating bureaucracy whose only goal was to continue in power. After Gompers came George Meany, product of a corrupt and racist plumbers' union local, who disdained strikes and nonunion workers and jumped into bed with U.S. intelligence agencies. He was an extreme jingoist whose persona can best be described as boorish, repulsive, and vicious. And finally the recently deceased Lane Kirkland took charge. Remarkably, he had no experience as a labor leader at all but was wholly a product of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy. Unremarkably by this point, he also had murky ties to the national security establishment and was friendly with an unpalatable array of antilabor right wingers. Unfortunately for the hapless Kirkland, his misleadership occurred simultaneously with the onset of economic stagnation and a sharp business attack on labor. As union density and political clout spiralled downward, all that he could do was wonder why his former employer partners and his friends in government were not more solicitous. He was so unable to grasp what was happening that there were cries within labor for his resigna-

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tion. He eventually resigned, with such diminished powers that he could not even anoint his successor.

While Buhle properly places the blame for the unique weakness of the U.S. labor movement on the decisions made by Gompers' progeny, he also faults many choices made by labor's left. Just as Gompers could have joined forces with the Knights of Labor and tried to build a more encompassing labor movement, so too the early socialists associated with the First International might have chosen to interpret Marx in a nondogmatic way and concluded that white, male, skilled workers were not necessarily the vanguard of the workers' struggles, to which all other struggles had to be subordinated. The leaders of the Knights, themselves, did not have to retreat from the great Knights' strikes just when they were showing so much promise. Gompers did not have to betray IWW and the militant socialist cadre to the police, but then again leading socialists did not have to ally themselves with Gompers and eventually become as rabidly conservative as he. Gompers and his progeny did not have to commit themselves to U.S. imperialism and undermine progressive workers' movements throughout the world, taking money from the CIA even as this agency of death was encouraging the murder and imprisonment of union leaders around the globe. CIO leaders did not have to join in the witch hunts, making the CIO virtually indistinguishable from the AFL by the time of the merger in 1955. But neither did the communists have to urge the government to lock up the Trotskyists and slavishly follow the directives of Stalin. All of this is not to say that the actions of some radicals and those of Gompers, et. al. are on the same plane, but to say that radicals made their own history, too.

There are valuable lessons to be learned from Buhle's examination of our labor history for those of us who want to help to rebuild the labor movement and make it a force for radical social transformation. First and most obviously, the "New Voice" leaders of the AFL-CIO cannot, by their revolution from above, overcome the overwhelming weight of the past. They can make some progressive changes (such as dismantling the International Affairs Department) and open up some

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space for radical activists. But they cannot radically transform themselves, much less the member unions, over which they have precious little control—precisely because they are, themselves, the product of a bureaucracy absolutely bereft of an ideology of class struggle. Federation leaders are busy creating new institutes and departments, endorsing various organizing drives and strikes, and organizing or speaking at conferences. But they are not busy developing a working-class ideology, championing union democracy, or formally denouncing racism and condemning U.S. imperialism.

Second, it would be a mistake for leftists to ally themselves too closely with the new leaders, because, if we do, we will inevitably begin to apologize for their shortcomings and to make rationalizations for them, just as did many erstwhile radicals in the days of Gompers. For example, in the first labor teach-in at Columbia University in 1996, philosopher Richard Rorty came close to apologizing for the New Left's opposition to the war in Viet Nam. (Buhle quotes Rorty as saying at this teach-in that at one time the AFL-CIO was leading the United States toward a classless society!) What sort of critical stance can we expect from people thinking like this? We can and should support any and all good things which the Federation and the member unions do, and actively participate in them whenever we can. But we should do this as leftists, and we should, at the same time, insist on building the broadest possible movement and refuse to subsume the fights against racism, sexism, homophobia, and imperialism to the Federation's definition of the working class and the labor movement.

Third, we need to think consciously of ourselves as the left wing of the labor movement and begin to work out a left-wing vision for the working class (including ourselves as members of this class). One way we might begin to do this is to take the egalitarian rhetoric of organized labor's most progressive voices at face value and turn it inward, toward the unions themselves. That is, we should enunciate and act upon the idea that unions must be militantly egalitarian organizations, organized not just to fight the employers but to serve as training grounds for the growth of a democratic and egalitarian society.

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Some radical intellectuals have downplayed the importance of union democracy, even arguing that it might be an impediment to union organizing. This is an argument that Mike Parker and Martha Gruelle convincingly dismiss. For them, it is evident that *Democracy is Power*, and their fine book is a thorough, accessible, and interesting guide for those brave souls who want to make their unions democratic. They argue persuasively that it is democracy that generates the worker power necessary to confront the bosses and the state, to defeat racism and sexism, and to teach workers to run their own affairs.

Parker and Gruelle make two obvious points about union democracy: "... a union will act in the interests of its members only if those members control the union" and "... the power of the union lies in the participation of its members, and it requires union democracy to make members want to be involved." They then buttress these remarks by pointing out the weaknesses of arguments against democracy. Union members will make mistakes, but so will union autocrats. Nothing pressures an autocrat to learn from his mistakes, but members of a democratic union have the power to reflect on errors and rectify them in open discussion. In an undemocratic union, leaders have no way to cope with a loss of faith by the members but, in a democracy, this cannot be a problem, by definition: leaders will get automatic feedback from members; leaders can be democratically replaced; members themselves will act spontaneously to defend the union; and leaders will be stronger because they know that they have the support of the members, who decided the union's policies in the first place.

Probably the most telling argument in favor of union democracy is the abject failure of the U.S. labor movement to increase membership and exert power against corporations and the government. While it is true that unions are on the whole far more democratic than businesses, it is also true that the U.S. labor movement can hardly be characterized as democracy in action. At their worst, U.S. unions have been organized as rackets, with officers stealing dues and pension monies and making sweetheart deals with employers. Leaders like James

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Hoffa might have extorted some wage and benefit gains for their members from employers, but the price paid by members was enormous, including the stolen money that might have gone into their paychecks.

Most other unions (excluding a small minority of truly democratic unions, many of which were evicted from the CIO during the McCarthy period) conduct themselves as "service" organizations, with union autocrats delivering the goods to a passive membership. In these unions, membership is akin to an insurance policy purchased by workers with their dues to insure them against unfair employer treatment and guarantee them good wages and benefits. The passive membership insures the leaders that they will not face any challenges to their power and perquisites. The trouble with this service model is that it allows the leaders to take actions without consequences to them, for example, the disastrous embrace of labor-management cooperation schemes in recent years. What is more, it has proven itself incapable of dealing with the employer attack on unions, which began during the onset of economic stagnation, in the early 1970s. Formerly powerful unions like the United Auto Workers (UAW) have suffered a string of setbacks, which might have been moderated or defeated had the unions been democratic. Compare, for example, the catastrophic UAW strike against Caterpillar with the recent achievements of the more democratic Canadian Auto Workers, which broke away from the UAW in part over the issue of democracy. Or compare the successful UPS strike with the Detroit newspaper debacle.

Modern research tells us that workers are more likely to join a union or win at the bargaining table when they actively participate in the organizing or bargaining. The "New Voice" leadership understands this, and has begun to focus upon member mobilization to rejuvenate the labor movement. However, Parker and Gruelle warn us that Sweeney and company are still wedded to the undemocratic idea that the masses have to be activated by them. They appear unable to grasp that it is the masses themselves who have to do the activating.

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Parker and Gruelle are well aware of the difficulties facing the union democracy movement. The entire culture, including that within most unions, encourages hierarchical thinking, passivity, and a deep-seated cynicism. Hierarchy appears normal because everywhere we look there are leaders and followers. Letting someone else do it for us is easier than taking actions ourselves. Corruption is so rampant in our society that it seems as if nothing can ever be done. Yet, in every workplace, there are those who don't buy into the status quo, who want and expect more from life, and are willing to take risks to get it. These natural leaders can form the base of the struggle for union democracy. Some of them will see the big picture, and others can be taught to see it by more conscious activists.

After providing readers with a solid defense of democracy, including an excellent discussion of the perniciously anti-democratic effects of racism and sexism, the authors furnish realistic and time-tested advice for union democracy activists. Every topic imaginable is covered: techniques for motivating members to participate in the union, winning elections, building a team after taking power in a local, union structures and bylaws, and national union affairs and elections. There are also helpful appendices on how to effectively participate and run union meetings, rules of order, making and changing bylaws, and useful resources. Boxes describing actual democracy struggles or giving concrete examples of what is discussed in a chapter are interspersed throughout the book. Examples are drawn from a wide variety of unions, although extra attention is given to the Teamsters for a Democratic Union, a natural prototype for union democrats. All told, this book is a must-read for both those new to the union democracy crusade and seasoned veterans.

Good books are those which not only provide readers with interesting facts and analyses, but those which lead readers to extend their own critiques. It struck me that leftists can best take advantage of the opening provided by the new AFL-CIO leadership by supporting as strongly as possible the fight for union democracy. This fight has the potential not only to rebuild the labor movement but to make it an integral part of

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the attempt to create a radically different society. Let us ask what sort of values are implied by a rank-and-file union movement committed to democracy and the solidarity necessary to make it a reality—that is, the values that might flow naturally from a struggle for union democracy:

1. Employment as a right, fully on a par with other civil rights, such as the right to free speech. A movement based upon solidarity and democracy cannot easily abandon those who are unemployed or, for some reason, not in the labor force. Anyone working today can easily find himself or herself out on the street, on public assistance, or even in prison. So many good things happen when people are secure in employment. It is easier to overcome divisions in the workplace, and the overall power of the working class increases.

2. Work as meaningful, with maximum integration, in every job, of our uniquely human capability to conceptualize and carry out work tasks, and a sharing of society's more onerous tasks. A democratic union will naturally turn its attention to the workplace, and the hierarchies found there will be no more tolerable than those in the union. Workplace hierarchies are based, in part, upon an inhuman division of labor, which divides up our jobs and doles them out to us in little mechanical pieces, unfit for truly human labor. From democratic unions to democratic workplaces seems a natural progression.

3. A good deal of consumption fully socialized: education at all levels, health care, including care for the aged, child care, transportation, and recreation (libraries, parks, playgrounds, gyms). In a real democracy, peoples' basic needs must be socially provided. Otherwise it will be difficult for some to fully participate in making decisions, in unions and in other organizations, and democracy will be defeated.

4. Maximum democratic control of production, whether by workers or communities, or both. As democratic control spreads from our unions to our workplaces, it will ultimately know no bounds. For what good will democratic and solidaristic unions be if decisions over the allocation of capital are made by a privileged few, intent on making maximum profits? Then, members of the most democratic union in the country will still be thrown out of work if their company shuts down or moves away.

5. Hours of work as low as possible, and no special reward given to those who toil longer. If we controlled our own destinies, doing interesting work for the good of our communities and societies, perhaps this would not be such an important issue. Then extra work might be something people

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would just do, out of social responsibility for the sheer enjoyment of it. But for now, we cannot be working ourselves to death; democracy is simply not possible if we do.

6. Work seen as part of our being in the world and every effort made to make work as nondestructive to nature as possible. If we are going to show solidarity with one another, then shouldn't we show solidarity with the earth itself? The degree of environmental destruction is much greater than most of us imagine, and we had better stop it or we will have the solidarity of the imprisoned, the solidarity of the shipwrecked.

7. No discrimination of any kind. An injury to one must be an injury to all, no matter who the one is—that is, irrespective of any person's race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. And we cannot say, as many have, that we will attack discrimination after we take power, because such a view really means that we will never do it. We must make the fight for democracy in our unions a fight for equal rights for all.

8. Equality, and not just some sham equality of opportunity, seen as a good in itself. When we think about it, it is very difficult to justify any significant differences in reward among human beings. Why should anyone make a great deal more money than another or have more wealth than another? Inequality is the great underminer of democracy.

It is clear that organized labor as presently structured will find it very difficult to lead us in these directions. But a democratic labor movement just might help us to awaken from the nightmare of the past and create a future not just as we please but a little more to our liking.

MARX TOPS POLL

Through September, BBC News Online ran a cyberpoll to find "the thinker of the millennium." Thousands of people from all over the world took part. Here are the results.

1. Karl Marx
2. Albert Einstein
3. Sir Isaac Newton
4. Charles Darwin
5. St. Thomas Aquinas
6. Stephen Hawking
7. Immanuel Kant
8. René Descartes
9. James Clerk Maxwell
10. Friedrich Nietzsche

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The CIA and the Cultural Cold War Revisited

by James Petras

Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta Books), £20.

This book provides a detailed account of the ways in which the CIA penetrated and influenced a vast array of cultural organizations, through its front groups and via friendly philanthropic organizations like the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations. The author, Frances Stonor Saunders, details how and why the CIA ran cultural congresses, mounted exhibits, and organized concerts. The CIA also published and translated well-known authors who toed the Washington line, sponsored abstract art to counteract art with any social content and, throughout the world, subsidized journals that criticized Marxism, communism, and revolutionary politics and apologized for, or ignored, violent and destructive imperialist U.S. policies. The CIA was able to harness some of the most vocal

James Petras is the author of thirty-six books and several hundred refereed articles. His most recent book is *The Left Strikes Back* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998).

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exponents of intellectual freedom in the West in service of these policies, to the extent that some intellectuals were directly on the CIA payroll. Many were knowingly involved with CIA "projects," and others drifted in and out of its orbit, claiming ignorance of the CIA connection *after* their CIA sponsors were publicly exposed during the late 1960s and the Vietnam war, after the turn of the political tide to the left.

U.S. and European anticommunist publications receiving direct or indirect funding included *Partisan Review, Kenyon Review, New Leader, Encounter* and many others. Among the intellectuals who were funded and promoted by the CIA were Irving Kristol, Melvin Lasky, Isaiah Berlin, Stephen Spender, Sidney Hook, Daniel Bell, Dwight MacDonald, Robert Lowell, Hannah Arendt, Mary McCarthy, and numerous others in the United States and Europe. In Europe, the CIA was particularly interested in and promoted the "Democratic Left" and ex-leftists, including Ignacio Silone, Stephen Spender, Arthur Koestler, Raymond Aron, Anthony Crosland, Michael Josselson, and George Orwell.

The CIA, under the prodding of Sidney Hook and Melvin Lasky, was instrumental in funding the Congress for Cultural Freedom, a kind of cultural NATO that grouped together all sorts of "anti-Stalinist" leftists and rightists. They were completely free to defend Western cultural and political values, attack "Stalinist totalitarianism" and to tiptoe gently around U.S. racism and imperialism. Occasionally, a piece marginally critical of U.S. mass society was printed in the CIA-subsidized journals.

What was particularly bizarre about this collection of CIA-funded intellectuals was not only their political partisanship, but their pretense that they were disinterested seekers of truth, iconoclastic humanists, freespirited intellectuals, or artists for art's sake, who counterposed themselves to the corrupted "committed" house "hacks" of the Stalinist apparatus.

It is impossible to believe their claims of ignorance of CIA ties. How could they ignore the absence in the journals of any basic criticism of the numerous lynchings throughout the southern United States during the whole period? How could

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they ignore the absence, during their cultural congresses, of criticism of U.S. imperialist intervention in Guatemala, Iran, Greece, and Korea that led to millions of deaths? How could they ignore the gross apologies of every imperialist crime of their day in the journals in which they wrote? They were all soldiers: some glib, vitriolic, crude, and polemical, like Hook and Lasky; others elegant essayists like Stephen Spender or self-righteous informers like George Orwell. Saunders portrays the WASP Ivy League elite at the CIA holding the strings, and the vitriolic Jewish ex-leftists snarling at leftist dissidents. When the truth came out in the late 1960s and New York, Paris, and London "intellectuals" feigned indignation at having been used, the CIA retaliated. Tom Braden, who directed the International Organizations Branch of the CIA, blew their cover by detailing how they all had to have known who paid their salaries and stipends (397-404).

According to Braden, the CIA financed their "literary froth," as CIA hardliner Cord Meyer called the anti-Stalinist intellectual exercises of Hook, Kristol, and Lasky. Regarding the most prestigious and best-known publications of the self-styled "Democratic Left" (*Encounter, New Leader, Partisan Review*), Braden wrote that the money for them came from the CIA and that "an agent became the editor of *Encounter*" (398). By 1953, Braden wrote, "we were operating or influencing international organizations in every field" (398).

Saunders' book provides useful information about several important questions regarding the ways in which CIA intellectual operatives defended U.S. imperialist interests on cultural fronts. It also initiates an important discussion of the long-term consequences of the ideological and artistic positions defended by CIA intellectuals.

Saunders refutes the claims (made by Hook, Kristol, and Lasky) that the CIA and its friendly foundations provided aid with no strings attached. She demonstrates that "the individuals and institutions subsidized by the CIA were expected to perform as part ... of a propaganda war." The most effective propaganda was defined by the CIA as the kind where "the subject moves in the direction you desire for reasons which he

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believes to be his own." While the CIA allowed their assets on the "Democratic Left" to prattle occasionally about social reform, it was the "anti-Stalinist" polemics and literary diatribes against Western Marxists and Soviet writers and artists that they were most interested in, funded most generously, and promoted with the greatest visibility. Braden referred to this as the "convergence" between the CIA and the European "Democratic Left" in the fight against communism. The collaboration between the "Democratic Left" and the CIA included strike-breaking in France, informing on Stalinists (Orwell and Hook), and covert smear campaigns to prevent leftist artists from receiving recognition (including Pablo Neruda's bid for a Nobel Prize in 1964 [351]).

The CIA, as the arm of the U.S. government most concerned with fighting the cultural Cold War, focused on Europe in the period immediately following the Second World War. Having experienced almost two decades of capitalist war, depression, and postwar occupation, the overwhelming majority of European intellectuals and trade unionists were anticapitalist and particularly critical of the hegemonic pretensions of the United States. To counter the appeal of communism and the growth of the European Communist Parties (particularly in France and Italy), the CIA devised a two-tier program. On the one hand, as Saunders argues, certain European authors were promoted as part of an explicitly "anticommunist program." The CIA cultural commissar's criteria for "suitable texts" included "whatever critiques of Soviet foreign policy and Communism as a form of government we find to be objective (sic) and convincingly written and timely." The CIA was especially keen on publishing disillusioned ex-communists like Silone, Koestler, and Gide. The CIA promoted anticommunist writers by funding lavish conferences in Paris, Berlin, and Bellagio (overlooking Lake Como), where objective social scientists and philosophers like Isaiah Berlin, Daniel Bell, and Czeslow Milosz preached their values (and the virtues of Western freedom and intellectual independence, within the anticommunist and pro-Washington parameters defined by their CIA paymasters). None of these prestigious intellectuals dared to

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raise any doubts or questions regarding U.S. support of the mass killing in colonial Indochina and Algeria, the witch hunt of U.S. intellectuals or the paramilitary (Ku Klux Klan) lynchings in the southern United States. Such banal concerns would only "play into the hands of the Communists," according to Sidney Hook, Melvin Lasky, and the *Partisan Review* crowd, who eagerly sought funds for their quasi-bankrupt literary operation. Many of the so-called prestigious anticommunist literary and political journals would long have gone out of business were it not for CIA subsidies, which bought thousands of copies that it later distributed free.

The second cultural track on which the CIA operated was much more subtle. Here, it promoted symphonies, art exhibits, ballet, theater groups, and well-known jazz and opera performers with the explicit aim of neutralizing anti-imperialist sentiment in Europe and creating an appreciation of U.S. culture and government. The idea behind this policy was to showcase U.S. culture, in order to gain cultural hegemony to support its military-economic empire. The CIA was especially keen on sending black artists to Europe—particularly singers (like Marion Anderson), writers, and musicians (such as Louis Armstrong)—to neutralize European hostility toward Washington's racist domestic policies. If black intellectuals didn't stick to the U.S. artistic script and wandered into explicit criticism, they were banished from the list, as was the case with writer Richard Wright.

The degree of CIA political control over the intellectual agenda of these seemingly nonpolitical artistic activities was clearly demonstrated by the reaction of the editors of *Encounter* (Lasky and Kristol, among others) with regard to an article submitted by Dwight MacDonald. MacDonald, a maverick anarchist intellectual, was a long-time collaborator with the CIA-run Congress for Cultural Freedom and *Encounter.* In 1958, he wrote an article for *Encounter* entitled "America America," in which he expressed his revulsion for U.S. mass culture, its crude materialism, and lack of civility. It was a rebuttal of the American values that were prime propaganda material in the CIA's and *Encounter*'s cultural war against

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communism. MacDonald's attack of the "decadent American imperium" was too much for the CIA and its intellectual operatives in *Encounter.* As Braden, in his guidelines to the intellectuals, stated "organizations receiving CIA funds should not be required to support every aspect of U.S. policy," but invariably there was a cut-off point—particularly where U.S. foreign policy was concerned (314). Despite the fact that MacDonald was a former editor of *Encounter,* the article was rejected. The pious claims of Cold War writers like Nicola Chiaromonte, writing in the second issue of *Encounter,* that "[t]he duty that no intellectual can shirk without degrading himself is the duty to expose fictions and to refuse to call 'useful lies,' truths," certainly did not apply to *Encounter* and its distinguished list of contributors when it came to dealing with the 'useful lies' of the West.

One of the most important and fascinating discussions in Saunders' book is about the fact that CIA and its allies in the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) poured vast sums of money into promoting Abstract Expressionist (AE) painting and painters as an antidote to art with a social content. In promoting AE, the CIA fought off the right-wing in Congress. What the CIA saw in AE was an "anti-Communist ideology, the ideology of freedom, of free enterprise. Non-figurative and politically silent it was the very antithesis of socialist realism" (254). They viewed AE as the true expression of the national will. To bypass right-wing criticism, the CIA turned to the private sector (namely MOMA and its co-founder, Nelson Rockefeller, who referred to AE as "free enterprise painting.") Many directors at MOMA had longstanding links to the CIA and were more than willing to lend a hand in promoting AE as a weapon in the cultural Cold War. Heavily funded exhibits of AE were organized all over Europe; art critics were mobilized, and art magazines churned out articles full of lavish praise. The combined economic resources of MOMA and the CIA-run Fairfield Foundation ensured the collaboration of Europe's most prestigious galleries which, in turn, were able to influence aesthetics across Europe.

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AE as "free art" ideology (George Kennan, 272) was used to attack politically committed artists in Europe. The Congress for Cultural Freedom (the CIA front) threw its weight behind abstract painting, over representational or realist aesthetics, in an explicit political act. Commenting on the political role of AE, Saunders points out: "One of the extraordinary features of the role that American painting played in the cultural Cold War is not the fact that it became part of the enterprise, but that a movement which so deliberately declared itself to be apolitical could become so intensely politicized" (275). The CIA associated apolitical artists and art with freedom. This was directed toward neutralizing the artists on the European left. The irony, of course, was that the apolitical posturing was only for left-wing consumption.

Nevertheless, the CIA and its cultural organizations were able to profoundly shape the postwar view of art. Many prestigious writers, poets, artists, and musicians proclaimed their independence from politics and declared their belief in art for art's sake. The dogma of the free artist or intellectual, as someone disconnected from political engagement, gained ascendancy and is pervasive to this day.

While Saunders has presented a superbly detailed account of the links between the CIA and Western artists and intellectuals, she leaves unexplored the structural reasons for the necessity of CIA deception and control over dissent. Her discussion is framed largely in the context of political competition and conflict with Soviet communism. There is no serious attempt to locate the CIA's cultural Cold War in the context of class warfare, indigenous third world revolutions, and independent Marxist challenges to U.S. imperialist economic domination. This leads Saunders to selectively praise some CIA ventures at the expense of others, some operatives over others. Rather than see the CIA's cultural war as part of an imperialist system, Saunders tends to be critical of its deceptive and distinct reactive nature. The U.S.-NATO cultural conquest of Eastern Europe and the ex-USSR should quickly dispel any notion that the cultural war was a defensive action.

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The very origins of the cultural Cold War were rooted in class warfare. Early on, the CIA and its U.S. AFL-CIO operatives Irving Brown and Jay Lovestone (ex-communists) poured millions of dollars into subverting militant trade unions and breaking strikes through the funding of social democratic unions (94). The Congress for Cultural Freedom and its enlightened intellectuals were funded by the same CIA operatives who hired Marseilles gangsters to break the dockworkers' strikes in 1948.

After the Second World War, with the discrediting in Western Europe of the old right (compromised by its links to the fascists and a weak capitalist system), the CIA realized that, in order to undermine the anti-NATO trade unionists and intellectuals, it needed to find (or invent) a Democratic Left to engage in ideological warfare. A special sector of the CIA was set up to circumvent right-wing Congressional objections. The Democratic Left was essentially used to combat the radical left and to provide an ideological gloss on U.S. hegemony in Europe. At no point were the ideological pugilists of the democratic left in any position to shape the strategic policies and interests of the United States. Their job was not to question or demand, but to serve the empire in the name of "Western democratic values." Only when massive opposition to the Vietnam War surfaced in the United States and Europe, and their CIA covers were blown, did many of the CIA-promoted and -financed intellectuals jump ship and begin to criticize U.S. foreign policy. For example, after spending most of his career on the CIA payroll, Stephen Spender became a critic of U.S. Vietnam policy, as did some of the editors of *Partisan Review.* They all claimed innocence, but few critics believed that a love affair with so many journals and convention junkets, so long and deeply involved, could transpire without some degree of knowledge.

The CIA's involvement in the cultural life of the United States, Europe, and elsewhere had important long-term consequences. Many intellectuals were rewarded with prestige, public recognition, and research funds precisely for operating within the ideological blinders set by the Agency. Some of the

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biggest names in philosophy, political ethics, sociology, and art, who gained visibility from CIA-funded conferences and journals, went on to establish the norms and standards for promotion of the new generation, based on the political parameters established by the CIA. Not merit nor skill, but politics—the Washington line—defined "truth" and "excellence" and future chairs in prestigious academic settings, foundations, and museums.

The U.S. and European Democratic Left's anti-Stalinist rhetorical ejaculations, and their proclamations of faith in democratic values and freedom, were a useful ideological cover for the heinous crimes of the West. Once again, in NATO's recent war against Yugoslavia, many Democratic Left intellectuals have lined up with the West and the KLA in its bloody purge of tens of thousands of Serbs and the murder of scores of innocent civilians. If anti-Stalinism was the opium of the Democratic Left during the Cold War, human rights interventionism has the same narcotizing effect today, and deludes contemporary Democratic Leftists.

The CIA's cultural campaigns created the prototype for today's seemingly apolitical intellectuals, academics, and artists who are divorced from popular struggles and whose worth rises with their distance from the working classes and their proximity to prestigious foundations. The CIA role model of the successful professional is the ideological gatekeeper, excluding critical intellectuals who write about class struggle, class exploitation and U.S. imperialism—"ideological" not "objective" categories, or so they are told.

The singular lasting, damaging influence of the CIA's Congress of Cultural Freedom crowd was not their specific defenses of U.S. imperialist policies, but their success in imposing on subsequent generations of intellectuals the idea of excluding any sustained discussion of U.S. imperialism from the influential cultural and political media. The issue is not that today's intellectuals or artists may or may not take a progressive position on this or that issue.The problem is the pervasive belief among writers and artists that anti-imperialist social and political expressions should not appear in their

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music, paintings, and serious writing if they want their work to be considered of substantial artistic merit. The enduring political victory of the CIA was to convince intellectuals that serious and sustained political engagement on the left is incompatible with serious art and scholarship. Today at the opera, theater, and art galleries, as well as in the professional meetings of academics, the Cold War values of the CIA are visible and pervasive: who dares to undress the emperor?

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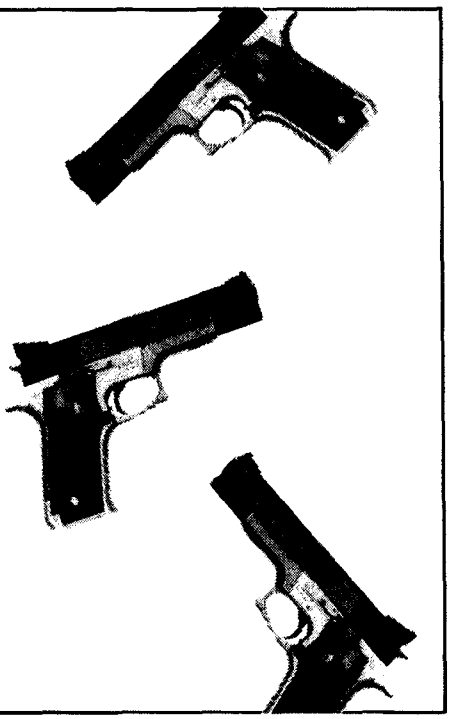

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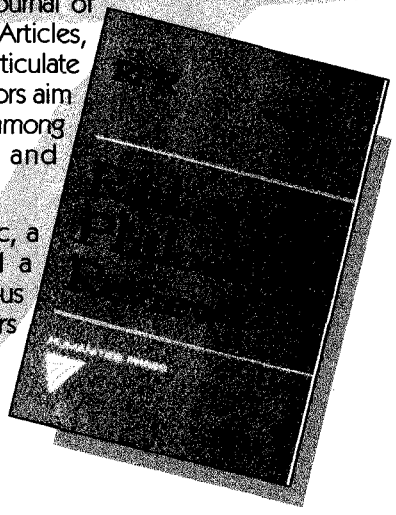
Radical Philosophy Review is a nonsectarian journal of ideas with a focus on progressive thought. Articles, interviews, and reviews in the journal aim to articulate and clarify central concepts of the left; the editors aim to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas among activist scholars, community activists and progressive artists.



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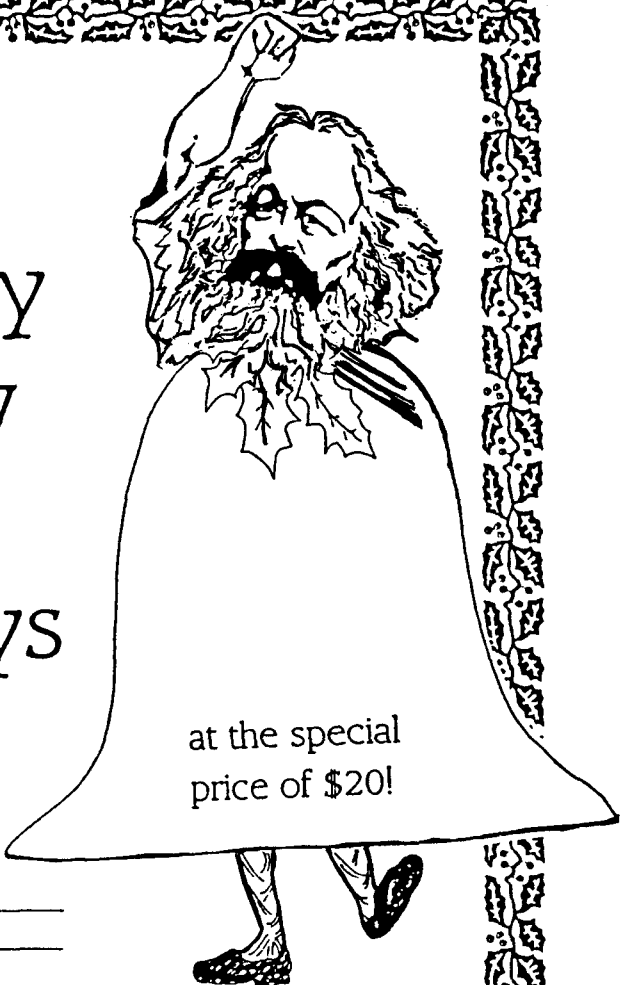

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Indonesia's severe economic crisis, the social instabilities that followed from it, and the challenge to the political and economic power of the military.

What about the Chinese anniversary, then? On the day of the anniversary, there was a news broadcast that gave a brief sketch of Chinese society today. First, we saw a sleek and prosperous-looking young Chinese businessman who proudly described himself as "a capitalist in a socialist country—and we're very welcome here." Then there was passing reference to the polarization of Chinese society, the growing numbers of poor and unemployed, the masses of migrants coming from the country to the city looking for work. All of this is what you might expect in a country where capitalists are "very welcome." There should be no surprise when we observe the inevitably destructive effects of introducing the logic of the market and the laws of capital accumulation. We have a harder time getting our minds around the oxymoron, "capitalist in a socialist country." No doubt many Chinese are having the same difficulty, as they confront the contradictions imposed on them by world markets and by their own government.

So the allegedly dead confrontation between capitalism and socialism is still dominating our world in all kinds of ways. This may not be so clear in the West, but the contradictions of capitalism certainly are. As we write these Notes, for instance, more news is coming in about the horrendous train crash in London. Nothing could be more transparent than how much blame lies with the privatization of the British railways. It's very simple, really. To begin with, there exists a safety mechanism that would have prevented this crash, recommended by a public inquiry into a rail disaster over a decade ago, but the private rail companies—and their government supporters (first a Conservative government, and now New Labour)—refused to install it on the grounds of cost.

The rights of shareholders come before the rights, indeed the lives, of passengers—even in law. Safety has in general been subordinated to profit, in low-cost lay-out and maintenance of tracks and signaling systems, in overcrowded trains, and in many other ways. And the destructive effects of privatization for profit have been aggravated by a particularly damaging and cynical form of privatization, deliberately designed to make re-nationalization virtually impossible by fragmenting the system (the train services themselves, for instance, are divided into several different companies, and all of them are separate from the company that owns the tracks and signaling systems).

The antithesis here between the logic of capitalism and the interests of humanity is about as basic and obvious as it gets—and that antithesis is, after all, what the confrontation between capitalism and socialism is all about.

Maybe those people who voted Marx the thinker of the millennium weren't motivated by nostalgia, as a spokesman for BBC News Online suggested. Maybe they were making a small comment on the contradictions of capitalism. Maybe they've noticed that the history of that confrontation between capitalism and its socialist antithesis is very far from over and will be with us as long as the capitalist system exists.

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Warm congratulations to *MR* friend Adrienne Rich, who recently won the Lannan Foundation's Lifetime Achievement Award. We wish her continued recognition for her necessary and impassioned work.

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(continued from inside front cover)

preceding preparation of this issue for the printer, for instance, the global news was dominated by East Timor. But in that month, too, the People's Republic of China celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. Then there were other, smaller stories, like the "cyberpoll" conducted by BBC News Online (we print the results on page 46), according to which the "thinker of the millennium" is Karl Marx. We could hardly be expected to resist commenting on that.

There's no doubt that East Timor is the most urgent of these stories. It's true that the mainstream media have done a somewhat better job of reporting it than they did, say, on Kosovo. We've even read a fair amount about the responsibility of Western powers, led by the United States and Britain, for the crimes perpetrated by the Indonesian state, in creating and sustaining the Suharto regime which started it all, in providing arms to Indonesia, and in long supporting the terror in East Timor itself. But there are still many larger issues raised by East Timor that go beyond the current news and call for extended discussion—questions about imperialism, about the disintegration of multi-ethnic states, about the arms trade, about the long-term consequences of the Asian economic crisis, and so on. These are just the kinds of questions MR articles typically discuss and will continue to discuss in the future.

But though we obviously can't analyze East Timor and also comment on those other stories in Notes from the Editors, their coincidence does evoke a few reflections.

The roots of the events in East Timor can be traced back to 1965, when Suharto, with other right-wing military officers, prepared the ground for his subsequent seizure of power by launching a bloodbath against the Indonesian left and above all the Indonesian Communist Party, the PKI (then the largest Communist Party outside the Soviet Union and China). The massacre and the bloody regime that followed it had the full support of the U.S. government and other Western states. The slaughter of communists evidently presented no problem. On the contrary, this was, in the eyes of cold warriors, an important contribution to the fight against communism. In other words, Cold War business as usual.

Now, of course, the Cold War is over, and so, we are told, is the confrontation between capitalism and socialism, with the complete and final triumph of capitalism. Yet today the world news is dominated by this Cold War legacy and some of its most brutal effects. Suharto is gone, but the consequences of his bloody regime and the military apparatus that sustained it, with Western support, lives on. There are also chilling echoes of the Cold—and not so cold—War in the recent statement by Australian Prime Minister John Howard that he wants Australia to be the regional "deputy" of the United States in Asia (serving the boss as it did in the Vietnam War?), which gives us an interesting insight into the role of Australian-led UN forces in East Timor.

If Indonesia is an example of capitalism's undisputed triumph, it has been, to say the least, an ambiguous victory in more ways than one. The instabilities of global capitalism have, of course, been dramatically on display in Indonesia in the wake of the Southeast Asian crisis. The latest chapter in the bloody story of East Timor has been playing itself out against the background of

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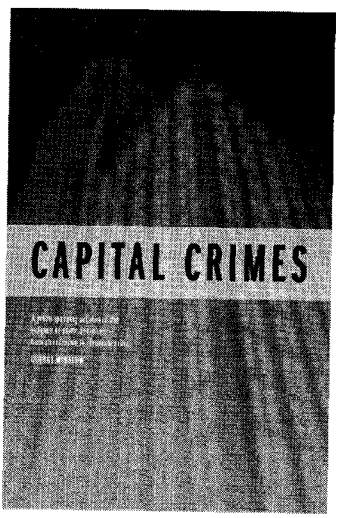

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